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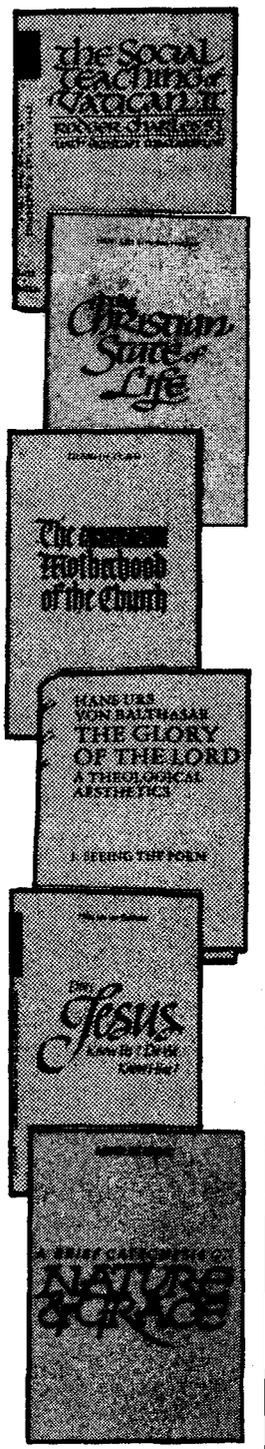
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Correspondence

I am pleased

New York, N.Y.

To the Editors: I was very pleased to see the tribute to Geno Baroni in the September 21 issue; and very sorry that none of the other liberal and left publications I read eulogized him. Geno was a significant figure in urban and other kinds of activism, as well as a memorable human being.

HERBERT J. GANS

I have no choice

New Castle, Del.

To the Editors: The editorial "Religion and Politics: Clearing the Air" [September 7] needs some air clearing of its own. The editorial states, "But it is time to clear the air and to say explicitly that there is as much 'room for sincere disagreement about policy implementation among Catholics in the one area [abortion] as in the other [arms].". . .

Where are you going to get the "room" for sincere disagreement? You will not find it in the Catholic church. The whole body of Catholic belief leaves no space. The issue is paramount. Catholics have no choice but to stand firm. Let others disagree. . . .

There are Catholic politicians who are quibbling on abortion. However, when they quibble they do so outside the church. In the church there can be no disagreement on this most basic moral issue.

LEON A. De ASCANIS

I am puzzled

Seattle, Wa.

To the Editors: After reading portions of *Commonweal* [September 7] I am puzzled as to why this publication claims to be Catholic. On page 451 the editors state that, "It is time for the Catholic bishops, or at least one or two prominent ones, to make themselves perfectly clear about the reasonableness of divergent views among Catholics on abortion policy."

Pope John Paul II and the Catholic bishops united with him still profess that abortion is murder and therefore to be opposed by all Catholics to the same extent as rape, robbery, and ax murders. But this publication is asking that some "prominent" bishops should publicly condone "policies" to the contrary.

Personally, I would vote for a pro-choice politician much the same as I would for an ax murderer, regardless of what other benign beliefs one held. I, as well as a great number of other voters, take abortion seriously and feel that it is the *most* shameful act for a "civilized" nation. . . .

As I have teenagers at home, I cannot allow publications which pervert or discredit the Roman Catholic church. Please cancel my subscription.

PETER G. DORNEY

I am appalled

Boulder, Col.

To The Editors: I was appalled at the reasoning contained in your editorial on Geraldine Ferraro for vice president [Aug. 10]. While you went to some length to point out where you disagreed with her regarding abortion, you cut the legs out from under your position by blaming Catholic education and culture for being at fault in the education and training of Ms. Ferraro.

Is no one at fault for his or her errors?

HUGH S. McCAFFREY

I am moved

Canton, Ohio

To the Editors: I was moved by Mary Ann Flannery's article, "The Torch Lady" [September 7], because it highlighted the insidious power of unconscious sexism over the lives of people — particularly women — who seek full realization of their rights. Neither feminism nor sexism is new, yet contemporary voters are exposed to rhetoric which suggests such a conclusion. And, if those in patriarchal positions of authority can pull it off, they will once again sweep another appeal for equality under the rug.

Women and others who are not anatomically "correct" for inclusion in the white male system are constantly forced to re-invent the wheel of their validity because those in power — white males — systematically reject, denigrate, or minimize their efforts.

Flannery has done us a service by highlighting the fundamental connectedness among women and other minorities in reminding us that Ferraro is neither new nor anomalous. Others have come before her. They must not be forgotten or silenced; they must not be reduced to "non-persons," and their efforts must not be dismissed as "non-events."

SHEILA MURPHY

I am concerned

Milwaukee, Wis.

To the Editors: I am not a liberal, a Democrat, or an American who is soft on Communism. I speak only as a Christian and a citizen, who believes with all my heart, that President Reagan has failed many times to act in the best interest of this great nation.

I appeal especially to the good Americans who are conservatives and ask them to please consider more seriously the one issue that could most change all of our lives drastically—nuclear war. . . .

Unfortunately, the arms race, the deficit, poverty, foreign policy and other priority issues have seldom been discussed because the number one issue of

(Continued on page 637)

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FAITH & THE ECONOMICS OF INEQUALITY

SIXTY YEARS AGO, when the very first issue of *Commonweal* went to press, the presidential election returns were not yet complete but the identity of the winner was known. He was Calvin Coolidge. Cynics might be tempted to observe that some things never change.

This editorial, in reality, is going to press a week before election day, at a time when all the polls but that final one on November 6 are pointing toward the reelection of the man who substituted Calvin Coolidge's picture for Harry Truman's in his administration's Cabinet Room. If times indeed have changed, the changes have only added ominous resonance to the phrases with which *Commonweal*'s editors greeted Mr. Coolidge in 1924. The new president, they wrote, would have to lead a "nation troubled and perplexed by most serious and highly perilous problems, complicated by the fact that this nation must in one way or another play a leading part among the other nations of the world at a time when peoples are facing a crisis graver than any recorded in the annals of humanity." In sum, the president faced "problems of unparalleled intricacy and magnitude — moral, economic, and international."

Moral, economic, and international — that sounds like a list of themes from the expiring presidential campaign. Unfortunately the three themes often were compartmentalized, with "moral," for example, referring to abortion, school prayer, and the knotty "religion and politics" issue. A year earlier, the Catholic bishops' historic pastoral letter on nuclear arms tried to warn against such compartmentalization, in that case between morality and international security questions. It is not clear how thoroughly the lesson stuck, even with members of the hierarchy. But now the bishops are about to try again, this time linking morality and economics. Not long after the media report the results of the election, they will be reporting the contents of the first draft of the bishops' pastoral letter on the American economy.

It is with that event in mind that we have chosen to devote this anniversary issue to the topic of Christian faith and economics. Only the lead article, however, directly discusses the bishops' effort, and we have tried to avoid covering topics that the bishops' draft was sure to address more thoroughly — the Scriptural basis of Christian attitudes toward economic life, for example, or the social teachings of the church over the last century. This issue emphasizes, instead, a number of adjunct or background considerations: the possibility that computerization may be rendering obsolete the economic remedies of both major political parties; the need for a nuanced debate on economic growth itself; the intersection of Christian values and the working concepts of mainstream economic theory; the emergence of new forms of poverty and of social-science theories to explain them (or explain them away); the challenge of living a Christian life resistant to the commodity culture of American capitalism; even the question of whether the bishops' credibility on "worldly"

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This 64-page combined anniversary issue is dated Nov. 2-16. Our regular printing schedule will resume with the Nov. 30 issue.

issues like economic justice does not depend on their determination to heal the old breach between home and workplace embodied in the different treatment the church metes out to men and women. Putting together this wide-ranging issue made us sharply aware of how much reception of the bishops' message may depend on the background assumptions about the present moment in American economic and political life that participants carry to the debate.

For example: One popular attitude holds that the overriding reality in approaching economic questions is the danger of statism. Such a stance links together a number of concerns. On the international level, the West is seen as hard pressed by Soviet Communism. On the national level, initiative and entrepreneurship are thought to be in terrible danger of strangulation by government taxation and regulation. On the cultural level, an educated "new class" supposedly promotes its own role in society by nurturing anti-business attitudes and by urging the expansion of the state apparatus in the name of social equality. The tendency of this position is to frame all issues against the background of a sharp dichotomy between capitalism and socialism, the market and the state, with democracy, pluralism, economic well-being, and individual freedom all identified with the former. Modern "mixed economies" are recognized as more or less unavoidable, but given this outlook's premises, the regulatory, planning, and redistributive functions of government are always on the defensive. Similarly, the church's economic criticism, its insistence on societal responsibility, its historic uneasiness about the capitalist ethos are likely to be viewed as "part of the problem," revealing the economic and political immaturity of church leaders and their need for worldly tutoring.

Our own view of the context in which the bishops are discussing the American economy is quite different. While the East-West conflict is a reality, it is relevant to the economic debate mainly in this sense: the failure of the West to find a solution to long-term issues of unemployment, debt, and third-world poverty will create far greater breaches in the defense of democracy than any number of foregone armaments. But otherwise, Western economies have been sturdier and more dynamic since the onset of active government intervention than before. And despite the fact that socialism has inspired many of the last century's social improvements, and the socialist-influenced economies in Northern Europe consistently outperform our own, nonetheless socialist theory is itself too much in flux and crisis, too cognizant of the value of markets, and simply still too stigmatized in American political discourse, to justify the fondness of both left and right for transforming all debate about economics into a confrontation between capitalism and socialism.

The setting in which the bishops' draft arrives is not one in which capitalism and its leadership are on the defensive. On the contrary, they are aggressively reassertive. The social and economic crises of the late sixties and early seventies have produced a reaction in which corporate interests have mobilized in an unprecedented fashion. To traditional forms of Washington lobbying have been added sophisticated public relations campaigns, the organization of grass-roots lobbying by stockholders and employees, strategic alliances with right-wing social insurgencies, shrewd and extensive funding of intellectuals, publications, and institutions favorable to the dissemination of pro-business ideology, and massive financing of political campaigns. Organized labor can scarcely claim junior partner status in this newest configuration of American power. The Republican party has become ideologically united on economic questions. Meanwhile, the Democrats are fragmented in loyalty and responsiveness — between the lower-income, working-class, and minority groups that have historically been their constituencies; the well-educated, politically active strata that adhere to liberalism for its protection of individual rights, including those of intellectual and moral dissent; and the business groups that, though they may prefer Republicans, provide Democratic incumbents with crucial support. The consequences of this contest between a well-mobilized and ideologically united business conservatism and a fragmented, under-financed, and under-organized liberal egalitarianism are by now evident. The share of taxes paid by corporations has declined sharply. Owners of capital and inherited wealth have seen their tax rates slashed. The distribution of tax breaks and spending cuts has been massively skewed by the federal government in favor of upper-income groups. Poverty has grown apace; the war against inflation and the adjustment to overseas competition has been assigned to the lower-middle of the income spectrum.

We do not deny that one can make a case for this development. That it is only a temporary readjustment. That it is essential to bringing up the absolute well-being of the poor even while inequality is increased. That its costs are exaggerated and its benefits underrated. Etc. The problem is not simply that we are unconvinced. It is that even if the current economics of inequality should misfire, the accompanying shift in *political* power may be so decisive that rectification will be impossible. Meanwhile, we believe, the public agenda is sorely limited. All kinds of alternative approaches to mixing markets and planning, enterprise and welfare, incentives and redistribution — operating successfully in nations as different as Austria and Japan — are dogmatically ignored. Furthermore, it is a moment when even so enthusiastic a supporter of assertive American capitalism as the *Economist* can write, "In today's America, where the market has become an object of worship in its own right, an attitude of devil-take-the hindmost is increasingly and disturbingly common."

Historically, one function of the "third way" of Catholic social thought, for all the vagueness of its rejection of both pure capitalism and pure socialism, has been simply to provide some open space for new ideas, to fan the embers of dissatisfaction, and to keep the search for justice alive. That should be an unabashed goal of the bishops today.

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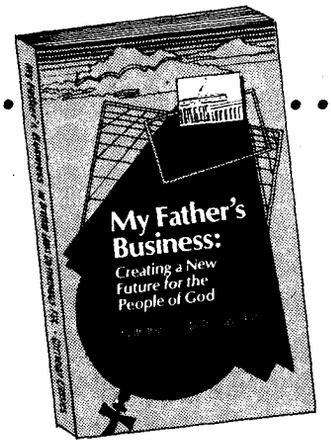

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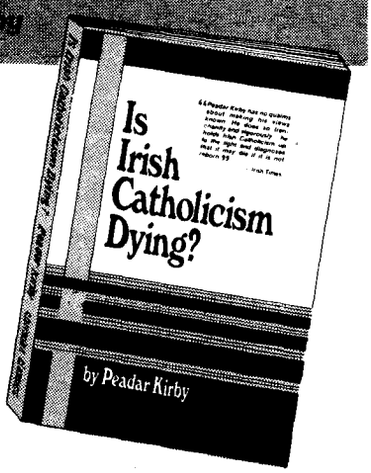

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Of several minds: *John Garvey*

POLITICS & RELIGION

HEIGHTENED RHETORIC, DEEPENED CONFUSION

THE DEMON in charge of trivializing public thinking has done a fine job of messing up the issue of politics and religion. This demon (which, I imagine, looks something like a squid) has had the cooperation of liberals, conservatives, archbishops, fundamentalist preachers, candidates for public office, columnists (myself excluded), and editorial writers. Rarely has an important issue been dealt with so shallowly.

Walter Mondale accuses Ronald Reagan of saying things that Ronald Reagan has not really said, and the Reaganites accuse a more foggy set of opponents of immorality and the desire to rid America of God, as if this could be done by liberal fiat. According to *Newsweek*, Pat Boone has made commercials which say that God needs Jesse Helms, implying that God is something of a needy wimp.

The desire to cast a wide net leads people who are running for public office to try to seem to mean as much as they possibly can without really being committed to anything solid, and this leads to a rhetoric which is, putting it mercifully, not very precise. Geraldine Ferraro's equivocation on abortion is aimed at voters more than at thinkers (a distinction between the two can, unfortunately, sometimes be made; before you vote, read Plato's *Gorgias* and give voting a second thought). It is assumed by Ferraro that a rather clean cut can be made between one's own personal religious convictions and one's public obligation.

In all of this debate there seems to be a nearly deliberate confusion and equation of the terms "religious," "moral," "denomination," "private," and "subjective," and an equal confusion and equation of the terms "political," "secular," "objective," and "public." So many of the terms involved here assume that we are all very clear about what religion is, or should be, and about how religion and the state ought to be related, or ought not to be. The "separation of church and state" is offered to us as if it were something like "Thou shalt have no strange gods before me" — not an important civic convenience, but a divine command. The same liberals who applaud the Catholic bishops for their stand on nuclear weapons are appalled when Archbishop O'Connor says that he doesn't see how a Catholic can in good conscience vote for someone who openly advocates abortion. I doubt that the same outrage would be provoked if O'Connor had said, "I don't see how a Catholic can in good conscience vote for someone who is prepared to destroy civilian populations during wartime." It would be worrisome if the archbishop had said, "Under pain of sin, no Catholic can vote for (etc.)" . . . but he said nothing of the sort; he said, "I don't see . . . ." He was expressing an opinion which would hardly have seemed dangerous if it had come from anyone but an archbishop.

What we have in so much of this debate is a case of pieties which are regarded by those who make use of them as unassailable. To be for God means to be for school prayer, anti-abortion legislation, government aid (or at least tuition rebates) for parents sending their children to religious schools — in short, for a conscious re-insertion of what some call religion into public life. Those who oppose such things are characterized as out-and-out secularists, as people who are against God, or at least indifferent to him. I do not mean that people who are in favor of any or all of the above take this attitude uniformly, but it is in the air, and certainly is a sentiment which has been appealed to by Ronald Reagan.

On the other side are those who speak of religion as an absolutely private affair, having no relationship to one's public commitments or political behavior. In the matter of abortion, for example, the teaching of the Catholic church is seen as narrowly denominational, like the old laws against eating meat on Friday. And of course if that were the case, laws which seek to make abortion less frequent would not only be unjust; they would even be eccentric. A good argument could be made that laws against abortion will not work, will create a new Prohibition-like disrespect for the law, and that Christians should not use the coercive power of the state to make even the best morality prevail; I have argued that way in the past, and Mario Cuomo made some of the same points in his speech at Notre Dame.

But this is not the argument which Geraldine Ferraro and those who favor free choice with regard to abortion have advanced. They argue, instead, that abortion is a religious concern, and therefore private. The problem with this is that it accepts a worldview which is impossible for a believer, a view which sees religion as a private taste or hobby. It is impossible for those who see the life of the child in the womb as human to accept the killing of that life without doing something to oppose it. If it became fashionable or socially convenient to regard the life of the handicapped or the comatose as inhuman, those who cared about justice could not simply accept that view and allow a slaughter to begin, on the grounds that their own belief that such lives are human is religious and therefore cannot be brought into the public arena.

Fashion does have something to do with this. As James Burtchaell has documented in his important book *Rachel Weeping* (Harper & Row, $10.95 paper), Planned Parenthood once argued that one of contraception's values was that it could help to prevent the tragedy of abortion, which Planned Parenthood did not hesitate to call the killing of a child in its mother's womb. Today Planned Parenthood's various newsletters sneer at this argument; but what great discovery has led them to see at last that the child in the womb is not human? Has it been demonstrated that the air in the hospital delivery room is what confers humanity? No: what has happened is that the cultural

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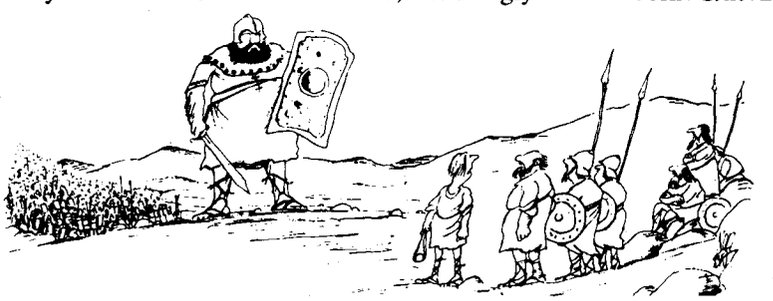
climate has shifted. It may not make for comfortable politics, but those who believe that the life in a human mother's womb is human life cannot simply back away from the issue. It is more than a religious idiosyncracy. The cultural climate of America was once capable of accepting slavery; it was a form of Protestant activism, the insertion of religion into public life, which began to make waves around that issue. The religious opposition to segregation and, later, opposition to the war in Vietnam were not opposed by liberals, but conservatives made some of the same accusations then that liberal editorialists now make: it was unseemly, even dangerous, for the church to involve itself with such political matters as whether blacks could be treated as semi-human or Vietnamese children should be napalmed.

The point is this: religious commitment may lead people to take up causes such as peace, opposition to abortion — or for that matter, the attempt to clean up TV, or ban pornography. Not everyone will be comfortable with what his neighbor defines as an important social, as well as religious, question. But if religious traditions have one major public value it is that they can provide an alternative to the spirit of the age, a perspective which is more profound than that of the prevailing cultural drift. No one would now deny that religious opposition to slavery was important; there were moderates who personally deplored slavery but were willing to live and let live, for the sake of peace. They argued that slavery's opponents were fanatical and intolerant, and indeed they were. Some things are intolerable.

The sort of liberal who thinks of religion as something which can be kept out of public life or politics is wrong. Secularism makes as many unfounded assumptions as any religious faith ever has. We look with some dismay at those Moslems who want to base governments on Koranic principles; but secularism as an ideology (one we aren't very good at seeing because it is so much in the air) is based on assumptions which are every bit as much matters of faith as the assumptions which pervade the Koran . . . for example, the belief that values are subjective matters of preference which have no reverberation outside of one's private life, or the belief that the public good is best served by assuming that the choice of the individual must be made an important focus of public concern. I am not saying that I do not like the latter belief (I think the former is demonstrably stupid); I am only saying that it is in its way a matter of faith, and untestable.

Are the conservatives who want to "bring God back into public life" correct, then? The conservative picture of God is a little like Tinkerbell in Peter Pan — God will die unless we say we believe in him, applaud him into life. True, a society which effectively denies the existence of God or (it comes to the same thing) acts as if belief were a matter of complete indifference is in danger. But it is possible to make an idol of God, and the God who requires specific political action, the God who needs Jesse Helms, or for that matter the victory of any liberal candidate, is certainly a God we use for our own purposes, not the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The God who is worshipped "in spirit and in truth" has been betrayed again and again by people who assume that he is on their side, whereas our worry should be whether we are on his. It is God whose opinions are so miraculously like our own who lies behind the Inquisitions and pogroms and Cromwell's slaughter, a familiar and useful God. Too much of the rhetoric behind the desire to "return God to the classroom" or "get God back into our lives" assumes that we have fallen away from a better time. But there has never been a truly Christian society, nor can one be created through the passage of the right laws. We should have enough fear of the Lord to know that we can know God only as God chooses to reveal himself, that we have no claim on him, that we are to "work out our salvation in fear and trembling." This requires a modesty and tentativeness with regard to specific programs and policies, not the complete absence of doubt about God's agreement with one's own view of things, the ruddy self-confidence which marks the speeches of that Teddy Roosevelt of evangelism, Jerry Falwell.

There are issues which will involve religious people politically, and that involvement will be annoying. Where issues which are matters of life and death are concerned — whether abortion or total war — religious people will be unable to keep out of the fray, and their presence will irritate those whose secular assumption is that secularism is objectively true, while religion is a matter of private taste. As they involve themselves, as they should, in these questions, religious people should also remember the past abuses of religion, which more often than not occurred when religion and power got too cozy. A truth which is enforced is not really a truth; a child who parrots the right answers in school without understanding them has learned nothing. Religion at the social level has been that way too often in the past. It betrays its nature and its deepest helpfulness when it is a token of belonging to the crowd of good citizens and respectable people. It may indeed have served well as a social control at certain points in the past, but that isn't what the prophets or the gospels are about. And if religion is there to guarantee an orderly society — if that is its highest role, its most important function — I'd suggest using cattle prods instead. They are cheaper than churches and, given the state of contemporary church architecture, not as ugly. JOHN GARVEY



"The only thing that niggles at the back of my mind is if God is on our *side, why did He give* them *the anabotic steroids?"*

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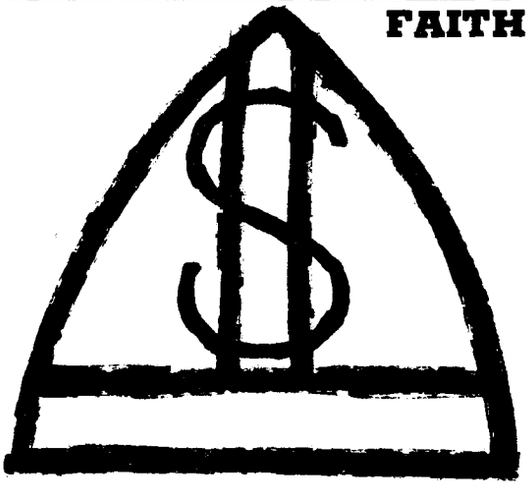

The bishops & the bottom line

JOHN LANGAN

ON JULY 4, 1977, some friends took me over to Memorial Stadium in Baltimore to watch the Orioles play the Tigers. The big drawing card for the occasion was the Tigers' pitching sensation, Mark "The Bird" Fidrych, who was in his second season of amazing the American League with his eccentricities. He had compiled a total of nineteen wins in his first season against nine defeats; and before that fateful July 4 he had won eight straight in his second season. But in the seventh inning of the game he was driven from the mound; and for the rest of the year he did not win another game. It was a dramatic illustration of the sophomore jinx, a phenomenon that overtakes many athletes and others who make a brilliant beginning but who lack the resources or the character or the luck to continue forward to build a successful career. It is particularly liable to affect athletes who may be tempted to overstrain their physical resources or who have a limited set of skills or tricks which they can push to the utmost for a time but which are likely to be countered by others. Thus pitchers are prime candidates for the sophomore jinx.

A good initial question about the Catholic bishops' letter on the American economy and Catholic social teaching is whether the bishops will be able to break the sophomore jinx. Will they be pitchers good for only one season or only one issue? Will they, as sometimes happens with those who are anxious both to protect and to repeat a previous success, allow their anxiety over getting it right to get in the way of their grasp of what is different in the new situation? One success, which in retrospect the peace pastoral clearly was, can actually increase the anxieties about possible failures and the worrying over specific details of the new project.

At this time, of course, there is very little that the committee charged with preparing the letter and chaired by Archbishop Rembert G. Weakland of Milwaukee can do. The draft has been completed and will be sent out to the bishops after November 6. It will be presented to the press on Sunday, November 11, and will be discussed by the bishops at their meeting during the following week in Washington. Until then most of us are in a period of uncertainty about what the document will say, and the authors of the document are in a period of anxiety about how it will be received. What follows here is not an effort to guess at, much less to alter, the contents of this first draft; but it is an attempt to extrapolate from the accomplishments of the peace pastoral, to underline some aspects of the context within which the bishops will speak, and to suggest some ways of assessing their solutions to the problems confronting the American economy. Perhaps all this may be of some help in the discussion that is only now going to begin among the bishops, the Catholic people, and the public generally.

To employ a metaphor that has been enormously influential in explicating the history of science, the peace pastoral offered a new paradigm for the development of Catholic social teaching in an American context. But paradigms that guide normal science or intellectual inquiry are not meant to be applied mechanically or mindlessly. Rather, they have to be applied to new situations and new problems in a way that respects the real diversity of the material and the ideas under consideration.

But what should be taken as paradigmatic elements established in the peace pastoral and worth repeating in this new document? There are four that most observers would point to immediately.

- First, the process of consulting a wide range of experts and representatives of groups whose interests are affected.
- Second, the conception of a dual audience for the document both inside and outside the church.

These first two elements should assure that the pastoral will be presented both as an extension and application of Catholic social teaching and as a contribution to a public moral debate which will have a bearing on the whole array of American economic and social institutions. It will have to meet both the test of conformity with Catholic social teaching as this has been propounded by recent popes and by Vatican II, and the

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tests of plausibility and applicability within the current American context. The process of open consultation and revision of the document is a vital contribution to establishing credibility with an American audience and in safeguarding the bishops' claim to be heard on a complex issue on which they have little obvious expertise.

● Third, the use of a clear distinction between fundamental moral principles, which are taught by the church as binding in conscience, and more specific applications, which, while not so concrete as judgments in particular cases, involve a prudential assessment of diverse policy considerations and tradeoffs. While this distinction does not eliminate all significant moral disagreements and may not always be easy to interpret, it does keep a vitally important distance between the affirmation of moral principles, which the church is called upon to present despite the variety of political and cultural circumstances, and the advocacy of particular policies, about which the bishops may make reasonable recommendations but where they cannot exclude alternative proposals. In the peace pastoral this distinction is present in the contrast between, on the one hand, the way in which the bishops treated the principles of proportionality and discrimination in waging warfare and, on the other hand, their recommendations of a "no-first-use" policy, which they explicitly said did not require assent from the faithful.

● Fourth, the teaching authority of the church should be exercised in a way that emphasizes and illuminates the moral urgency of the key issues without being peremptory or authoritarian. It should show a profound respect for the different social situations and perspectives of the various economic actors as well as a serious concern on the part of the church and its leaders to minister to the needs, hopes, and anxieties of the different parts of the one religious community that is the church.

While there is ample precedent for achieving this delicate balance of credibility, complexity, urgency, and openness in the peace pastoral, especially where it addresses the various groups involved in national security issues, it is precisely with regard to the diversity of economic actors and their needs and ideas that a major difference between the two pastorals emerges. The sovereign state with its right of national defense, the just-war theory and its dialectical relationship to the witness of Christian pacifism, the institutional structure of the Department of Defense and NATO, the long-standing adversary relationship with the Soviet Union and its expansionist ideology — all of these taken together provided a frame around a relatively well-defined set of problems having to do with national security policy and the possible military and political functions of nuclear weapons. This is not to say that it was an intellectually or politically easy task to provide a coherent set of answers to the problems or to keep the various elements of the frame from destructive collisions. On the contrary, fulfilling these tasks was a major accomplishment for American Catholicism and a major contribution to the public debate. The pastoral provided a solid intellectual and institutional base around which the fears and anxieties of the nuclear debate could find a certain rational clarity without losing all sense of urgency. As we all know, this accomplishment was centrally the work of two men: Cardinal Bernardin of Chicago and Father Bryan Hehir of the United States Catholic Conference.

THE PASTORAL on the economy, by contrast, has to deal with a range of problems that run across all aspects of American and global society. It approaches them, to be sure, from the standpoint of Catholic social teaching as this has been developed in the series of papal social encyclicals begun by Leo XIII in 1891 with *Rerum Novarum* as well as in Vatican II's constitution on the church and the modern world, *Gaudium et Spes*. These sources provide a rich body of material, largely conceived in response to the problems of industrialization, social strife, and decolonization as these affected Western Europe over the last hundred years. But this material lacks the clarity and concision of the classical presentations of just-war theory. Many of its specific recommendations have become outmoded, many were designed to address the problems of European societies; some, particularly those in the recent encyclical of John Paul II on human work, *Laborem Exercens*, are really so generic that they are compatible with a wide variety of institutional arrangements.

There are, of course, very important elements in this tradition which require vigorous affirmation in post-industrial, pluralist, neoconservative United States. Among these are the comprehensive affirmation of human rights in *Pacem in Terris* by John XXIII, the consistent affirmation, by all the popes from Leo XIII on, of the right of workers to form unions free of company or government domination, the rejection of class struggle and the insistence on cooperation and human solidarity as the foundation of our social life, the concern for international cooperation and for the building of international institutions. These are all themes which are solidly supported by previous commitments of the church's social teaching and which still retain some controversial bite in current circumstances.

What all this comes to is that there is both point and difficulty in working out a restatement of major themes from the tradition of Catholic social teaching in a way that will be informative for the shaping of current American policy. This requires a critical sifting and reinterpretation of the tradition along the lines of what David Hollenbach, S.J. has accomplished in his treatment of human rights in the Catholic tradition, *Claims in Conflict* (Paulist Press, $5.95 paper).

In addition to the greater complexity of the task of doctrinal reinterpretation with regard to economic structures and the demands of social justice, there is also the greater complexity of the reality being reflected upon the economic pastoral. The bishops are dealing with a central aspect of the life of more than 230 million people — more than three trillion dollars worth of goods and services together with considerable unreported but economically significant activity. The letter has to evaluate and prescribe for thousands of corporations, some of which have revenues larger than all but a few nation-states in the world; for hundreds of thousands of lawyers, accountants,

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and consultants; for millions of union members. The U.S. economy is the largest economic unit in human history and because of its centrality today has innumerable links with other economies around the world through trade, through investment, and through the international workings of multinational firms. These links prevent the bishops as well as other students of the U.S. economy from offering any comprehensive treatment of it in abstraction from its international context. There is a certain presumption in the Catholic bishops' effort to offer synoptic criticism and guidance for such a vast tangle of interconnected human activity. One one level, one wants to applaud their courage; on another, one sympathizes with Thomas Carlyle's reaction to the news that the American transcendentalist Margaret Fuller had decided to accept the universe, "By God, she had better." The presumption of the bishops in assaying the economy would be the more remarkable if such a project were not itself so thoroughly American in its combination of candor, moralism, and optimism.

In addition to the complexity of the economy itself, marked as it is by continuing technological innovation, by waves of fashion, and by long-term patterns of growth and decline, there is also the complexity of intellectual discourse about the economy. In short, the diversity — and downright contradictoriness — of economic theories and theorists.

Here the bishops face the alternative pitfalls of being theory-dependent and theory-independent in a situation where there are many conflicting theories. This again is a point of difference with the peace pastoral where the difficulty lay not so much in accepting a fairly standard account of how deterrence works but in proposing a moral assessment of this relatively new phenomenon which would not collapse into amorality or self-contradiction. But in moving forward to offer a set of recommendations for national *economic* policy, the bishops will have to make up their minds not merely to propose a negative valuation of both unemployment and inflation but to argue that both these evils can be minimized in a way that is effective in the present situation of the U.S. economy. The bishops face the unattractive prospects of being criticized for adopting the views of one set or school of economists and according them a special religious status (an outcome from which both Marx and Lord Keynes would have derived sardonic amusement), or for failing to deal with questions of economic policy in intellectual depth, or for offering an eclectic set of "good ideas" which may be neither coherent nor effective and which fail to make the tradeoffs and hard choices that real economic and political life imposes. It is only fair, however, to bear in mind that these possibilities confront secular as well as religious observers who would prescribe for the economy.

Looking at the bishops' task in general terms we may well expect that the positions they take about the nature and prospects of the economy will involve both difficult decisions for them and fierce controversy among their expositors and critics. This is where their pitches will have to be in or near the strike zone. What we may reasonably expect is a series of positions clustering around the moderate left of professional economic opinion and with occasional deviations in radical, populist, or even conservative directions. This, if it is well done, can provide an intellectual framework for their policy recommendations; this framework would not be very different in intellectual merit and scope from similar frameworks that shape the policy decisions and arguments of other participants in economic debates. Whether it will carry much religious weight or conviction is another matter. But the bishops will clearly want to avoid the appearance of giving religious sanction to the views of economic doctrinaires.

What will distinguish what the bishops say from various economic newsletters and professional articles will not be any claim on their part to offer a fix or a cure for the ills of the American economy, but a steady insistence that the outcomes of American and international economic processes must be looked at in moral and religious terms. For theologians and religious activists, for men and women of faith, such a claim will be unexceptionable. So large an area of human activity with so many consequences for human well-being and character cannot be exempted from God's sovereignty or God's judgment. The words of the prophets, the parable of Dives and Lazarus, the Beatitudes, the prescriptions of the Torah for the protection of widows and orphans all make it clear that what the economy does to people and what people do in the economy cannot be relegated to the realm where technical considerations rule and religious concerns are merely peripheral. Of course, the words of Scripture do not provide a plan for economic policy; and, as in the peace pastoral, the bishops will want to affirm both the relevance and the inconclusiveness of the biblical material for contemporary policy discussions. On the other hand, they will be reminded of the strong religious elements and the abundant use of biblical themes and images in many popular American movements for social justice and for the economic betterment of the poorest and weakest sectors of American society. Here the struggles for union organizing in the thirties and earlier, the place of the churches in struggling for the rights of black people, and the Catholic concern for the conditions of Hispanic workers are all relevant and exemplary.

On the other hand, the bishops know that they are leading a vast and differentiated flock, which is not composed simply of the oppressed of the earth. It includes CEOs of Fortune 500 companies; legions of lawyers, brokers, accountants, and middle managers as well as the blue-collar ethnics of the industrial belt from Pittsburgh to Milwaukee. Catholics may not provide many of the Andrew Carnegies or Ross Perots, examples of extraordinary entrepreneurial success; but it is clear that very many Catholics, especially from the older ethnic groups, have done quite well indeed and that there is a certain fit between some elements of the Catholic tradition and its bureaucracy and some of the needs and values of corporate America. The bishops have to recognize that the ethos of corporate America both shapes and is shaped by many of the most talented and generous people in their own flock.

Not a few of these people are deeply committed to the preservation of human moral values in their work and in their

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economic activity generally; they value honesty, consideration for the rights of others, professional competence, and integrity in the performance of work. They may even consider their work, in some sense, as a vocation with a profound personal religious significance.

But it is also true that for most of these same people the economic system is a realm of necessity, a secular and even amoral world in which personal and corporate competitors pose real threats, a world in which communication and evaluation are often reduced to the numbers that spell out short-term results and the famous "bottom line." The economic world of markets and corporate activity is not to be caricatured as simply a jungle or a rat race; like any other major human endeavor, it produces tears and laughter, camaraderie and tension, success and failure, virtue and vice. Nonetheless, it is not easy for most of the people who spend the prime time of their working day in this economic world to see any easy harmony between its often frenetic activity and their religious aspirations, or to feel that it nourishes and sustains them in a comprehensive way as human beings. The corporate world, it cannot be denied, does provide much of the vitality and creativity of our society; it offers many of the opportunities for a richer, fuller life that are open to ordinary Americans. The struggle of women and minorities to obtain higher positions in American corporations is, after all, a struggle for a significant good. But it remains the case that for most American Catholics a job is a job, and the economic realm is one where the alternatives that are open and that are not forbidden by law are usually perceived to be morally indifferent. Here the bishops confront a significant opportunity to alert members of the Catholic community to morally significant aspects of what passes for business as usual. This may be more a matter of pointing to problems such as plant-closings, low rates of savings, lending policies to third-world and East-bloc countries, marketing of tax shelters, attitudes to performance in the workplace, effects of welfare policies and welfare cutbacks on families, and less a matter of offering solutions that can be guaranteed to be both effective and morally preferable. In the present climate of opinion, the bishops would still be making a valuable contribution to the education of the American Catholic community and to the public debate on economic issues. As in the peace pastoral, they would have established an important point of reference for subsequent action and reflection.

CRITICIZING THE PRESUPPOSITIONS and the performance of the U.S. economy from a moral point of view is always bound to be an uphill task, and both the bishops and their critics would do well to admit this. Ever since eighteenth-century moral philosophers in Scotland and England began looking in a serious way at the emerging capitalist form of economic organization — a system of activity in which individuals and firms would be free to make economic decisions in a decentralized way to meet needs and preferences as revealed in the marketplace and thus to satisfy their self-interest — the moral arguments for capitalism have had to be indirect. Earlier Catholic theory as well as the statist ideological tendencies that shaped the monarchies of the Renaissance and Baroque periods looked to the achievement of the common good under the central direction of a state oriented, of course, toward respecting the rights and privileges of the traditional orders of society.

Capitalism has always been a problem for Catholicism because of its individualism, its hope of achieving order through consent and exchange rather than by subordination, and its tendency to emancipate economic agents from other forms of social control. These points of tension, it should be noted, partly overlap with and partly conflict with the criticisms of capitalism that would be made by Marxists, by populist radicals, by proponents of social democracy and of state planning, and by advocates of a Christian communitarianism as this is sketched out in Acts 4.

For its defense against so many adversaries, capitalism has had to rely on considerations about the weakness of benevolence in our motivations and about the inadequacy of our knowledge, to the building of the grander forms of social order. It has had to make do with catalogues of its adversaries' excesses and follies, with proposals for channeling human selfishness into socially beneficial directions, and with its proven though uneven record in generating enormous sums of wealth. Since capitalism does not aim directly at equality or at the inculcation of moral virtue (though it has to rely on the presence of certain virtues in its citizens if it is to survive) or even at the common good, it has always been open to moral broadsides. Because of its limited aspirations and because of the failures and crimes with which its own history has been filled, capitalism has also been a preferred target of utopian thinkers, who enjoy the privilege of contrasting the rose and azure of imagined realms of social bliss with the dross and grime of industrial capitalism.

These attacks have not usually been threatening to capitalism, which enjoys the defensive advantages of the status quo, unless they have also been able to draw on the discontents of a public battered by economic catastrophe or by the collapse of a nation-state. Proposals for the wholesale replacement of capitalism no longer have the vogue that they

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once did among the intelligentsia, largely as a result of our seeing the political and economic costs of the more radical alternatives. This, however, does not lead to complacent approval of the activities of particular capitalists. There is room, in this country and more so in developing countries, for vehement criticism of particular corporations, policies, and individuals. This leads to protests, investigations, and demands for regulation and often shades over into sweeping ideological criticism.

The crucial point for the current debate is not whether capitalism as a whole is a satisfactory system or whether it needs replacement by some alternative system, nor even whether it has serious failures and flaws (a point which few would deny). The first two questions have little vitality, even among those religious radicals who manage to sound like a cross between Trotsky and Ralph Nader. The view that questions about the survival of capitalism are fundamental to what the bishops are doing is, I would argue, really an effort to discredit significant reformist criticism of the workings of contemporary American business by presenting it as radical dreams and agitation coming from people who do not understand the genius of the system.

Rather, the central moral question about capitalism for someone approaching the debate from the standpoint of recent Catholic social teaching is the lack of fit between the view of human rights which has been propounded in that teaching, particularly in John XXIII's *Pacem in Terris* (1963), and the outcomes produced by the U.S. economic system. In the Catholic approach to human rights theory, there is a clear affirmation of what are commonly called "social and economic rights," that is, rights to food, clothing, housing, education, and medical care, as well as to different forms of social participation, of which the right to a job is particularly important.

The standard conservative line of response to these affirmations runs something like this: State provision of basic necessities undermines the work ethic. When it has been attempted in developing countries, it has severely distorted the local economy. Capitalism, by producing greater wealth than a state-managed economy, will in the long run produce greater amounts of the basic necessities and will provide an economic system which can function for the benefit of the majority over time and will provide the beef to meet social and economic claims.

Several points need to be made about this line of argument. First, it points to the importance of the connection between production and distribution and to the limitations of the characteristic emphasis by moral reformers on just distribution. Second, it focuses on the difficulty of meeting basic needs in developing countries rather than on the imperfect but significant achievements of social democracy in more developed European societies. Third, it is not a complete rejection of the objective of meeting basic human needs. It can even offer a free-market approach as a better means of meeting these needs over the long term. When it does this, it offers what I have been calling an indirect moral justification for capitalism. But this indirect justification requires an appeal to the facts, a consideration of the actual performance of the American economy in meeting these needs. Real people are not fed by merely possible bread. Fourth, once the objective is admitted, then the debate turns largely to comparisons of different means and their advantages and disadvantages. The conservative case is for satisfaction of basic needs and for the meeting of human rights standards in this area, not by government provision, but by the long-term working of the free market supplemented by private charity. It is, however, noteworthy that the Reagan administration has deviated from the purest type of conservative doctrine in these matters by accepting the legitimacy of a "safety net" to protect those who suffer catastrophic reverses. In doing this, the Reagan administration is following the standard conservative tack of accepting the substance of the welfare state even while trimming some of its less politically sensitive extensions and denying it full legitimacy.

These last two points illustrate how difficult and unsatisfactory it will almost certainly be to join the issue between Catholic social teaching and contemporary apologias for American capitalism. The American economy is not geared directly to meeting basic human needs, particularly for those persons without the intellectual, psychic, or financial resources to take an active role in the economy. Contemplating the situation of those persons who are marginal to the economy produces moral dissatisfaction among many people, not merely among leftist Catholic members of the so-called new class. The majority of the American people, however, do not seem to want a reorientation of the economy and of government activity which would dramatically increase the level of entitlements; nor do they feel enough confidence in welfare agencies and the effects of their programs on their clients to commit greater resources to these agencies and programs. Furthermore, it is doubtful that such a reorientation of the American economy would make it either more productive or more attuned to the cultural expectations and values of most Americans. Added to this is the widespread sense that both particular corporations and the American economy as a whole must be ready to compete on whatever terms are necessary with other industrial economies.

All these considerations produce a stalemate in our deliberations in which there is a widespread reluctance to add moral burdens to an economy which is seen as on the mend but still vulnerable and with many unresolved problems. Among these latter, bringing down the federal deficit, protecting the national and international banking system, maintaining American exports despite the strength of the dollar, and controlling inflation are all more likely to attract the attention of policymakers than does the project of extending opportunities for participation and benefits to those who are on the fringes of the economy. It is worth noting that the objectives I have just mentioned all strike thoughtful observers as worth promoting and that they have morally significant aspects. At the same time they are not easy to achieve, and they require political and economic leadership that is strong and realistic enough to make hard choices and to elicit sustained support for them.

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THE CRUCIAL QUESTION for the bishops is how to deal with this reluctance to accept a broader vision of the goals of national economic policy. My own view is that the bishops should oppose it, but that at the same time they should show an understanding of the reasons and concerns that lie behind it, many of which are far from being foolish or merely selfish rationalizations. There can be no question of the bishops' accepting a view of the American economy which simply acquiesces in the outcome of either regulated or unregulated economic processes. Both the processes and the outcomes require moral scrutiny and moral criticism. The biblical material which the bishops take as a fundamental starting point and the example of Jesus himself should prevent Christians from accepting the outcomes of economic history as a divine judgment on people and a rejection of the poor. Both the prophets of Israel and our ordinary moral perceptions should enable Christians to understand the continuing moral challenge that widespread poverty and unemployment constitute for any economy. If the conservative case for capitalism is to rest on its indirect long-term effects on the lives of people and on the ways in which it enables people to combine freedom and a decent standard of living, then attention must be paid to the facts of life among the mountain people of Appalachia, the inner-city blacks of Detroit and Cleveland, the migrant farmworkers of Florida and California.

This is not a matter of retelling a familiar tale of woe, but of acknowledging that many of the facts of economic life in the United States are morally troubling. Such an acknowledgment can be compatible with a recognition of the significant economic achievements of capitalism and with a vigorous affirmation that it is preferable to other economic systems. It can also be coupled with a humble acknowledgment that neither the church nor those it has consulted have a proven remedy for resolving the problems of poverty and unemployment. But the church must urge the needs of the poor precisely as a moral challenge to the economy and to those who exercise significant power within the economy. This challenge is not a moralistic denunciation which aims at giving idealists and external critics a sense of superiority over those who actually do the work and make the hard decisions. Rather it has to be a reminder of how far we have to go in making promises of freedom and abundance effective for the millions of people who have proudly chosen to be Americans. This is the kind of challenge which has drawn generous responses from American society in the past. These responses have not been perfect or consistent, but they have been effective over time in building an economy that has produced over a hundred million jobs and that has sustained both a high standard of living and a vital, open, and self-critical culture.

"A just price for just goods! A just price for labor! You are *new here!"*

SOME MAY OBJECT that such an approach consigns the bishops to a merely reformist role, when they should be promoting radical change. Here I think we need to distinguish between the spirit of pragmatic innovation which has been a valued part of our culture from our beginnings and an ideological commitment to alternative ways of organizing society. If radicalism is taken in the first sense, the American people are usually willing to consider radical proposals. If it is taken in the second sense, it will be seen as a bias that discredits even reasonable proposals. The bishops would do well then to present themselves as religious teachers concerned both to learn about the actual working of the economic system and to alleviate some of its negative effects. They would also do well to remember that the recent history of the church is marked by failures in both economic understanding and economic practice. The church as an economic actor no longer has the importance that it had in medieval society or in such traditional Catholic societies as pre-revolutionary Mexico, where it was a major landholder. But the church does operate a range of economically significant institutions, such as universities, hospitals, and school systems; and it has investment portfolios. As the careers of Michele Sindona of Franklin National and other banks and Roberto Calvi of the Banco Ambrosiano illustrate, the church enjoys no charism of financial infallibility. The church and church organizations often have to work through such issues of economic justice as the proper functioning of unions, the development of a morally sound investment policy, the provision of adequate salaries and a sense of participation for employees of the church and its organizations, and the establishment of well-defined policies of openness and accountability in financial matters. In all of these practical tasks the church has both to confront and overcome past failures and to learn from the larger economic experience of our pluralistic society. More fundamentally, the recollection of the church's mixed record as an economic actor, sometimes wise, sometimes gullible, sometimes generous, sometimes selfish, provides an anchoring in realism about the ways in which church teaching about economic and social matters actually affects human behavior. Church teaching has hardly radicalized the church itself in its internal workings, though it has contributed to important possibilities of reform.

In the discussion and revision of their pastoral on the U.S. economy, the American Catholic bishops have a second great opportunity to impress on both the Catholic community and the larger public the vital importance of the moral aspects of public issues. If they follow the example of the peace pastoral,

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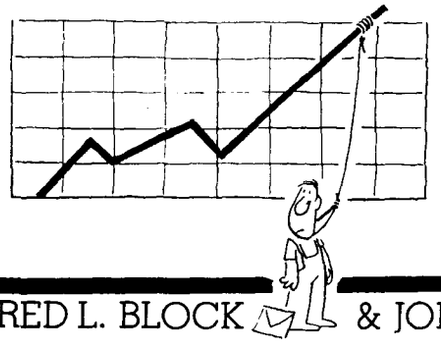
they will take inspiration and direction from the Bible. They will acknowledge both the complexity of the problems and the moral urgency of addressing them; they will challenge but not condemn conservative apologias for the way things are; and they will encourage a pragmatic, reformist spirit which questions important aspects of the status quo without rejecting fundamental values of the American tradition.

The major area in which they will most need to exert themselves so as to extend the American tradition is the clear delineation of the moral claims of the solidarity that binds us together as human beings sharing a common destiny under God. Such a delineation necessarily involves a critique of the more extreme expressions of individualism and self-reliance in our national culture. The bishops, on the other hand, should not attempt to provide religious sanctions for a particular economic theory or program. They will almost certainly not put themselves in the position of endorsing one set of tradeoffs and economic policies, nor will they take a condescending attitude toward those who actually have to make economic institutions work.

In working out this pastoral, the bishops have to work within a narrow strike zone. Their aim should not be to mow down the opposition with a series of blazing fast balls with a lot of radical smoke on them. Rather, they should aim to keep the batters' attention with a judicious mix of precision pitches. After all, the bishops are no longer rookies.

FAITH & ECONOMICS: DISTRIBUTING THE JOBS



Computerization changes the rules

FRED L. BLOCK & JOHN B. JUDIS

THE DEBATE OVER economic policy in the 1984 election — revolving around who has a secret plan to raise what — has been one of the least enlightening ever. The superficiality of the campaign has only hidden a deeper confusion in the candidates' economic assumptions. Take the issue of jobs. Both President Ronald Reagan and Vice President Walter Mondale have pledged that their programs will provide a job for anyone who wants one. In the October 8 debate, Reagan stated, "We're not going to rest, or not going to be happy, until every person in this country who wants a job has one."

But anyone looking at the Reagan administration's record — the worst recession since the Great Depression, and unemployment during a recovery that is on the same level as unemployment during past recessions — or at the record of the last Democratic administration must recognize that full employment, as described by Reagan and Mondale, is at best an elusive goal.

Mondale's current proposals — to raise taxes and reduce spending — would certainly not increase employment; most likely, these measures, by reducing consumer demand, would cause greater unemployment.

Why, then, do the candidates persist in claiming that their programs will produce full employment? One reason is that full employment, like the balanced budget, has become a campaign shibboleth, an altar at which all candidates must worship, regardless of their intentions. But another reason is that both Mondale and Reagan are working with obsolete models of the economy that make it *seem* as if their programs will produce full employment.

Ronald Reagan views the economy as a stallion straining at the bit — the bit being unnecessary government regulation and taxes. Loosen and finally remove the bit, and the economy and jobs will surge ahead. Walter Mondale sees the economy as a Chrysler Imperial idled at the side of the road. With a few fiscal repairs and a full tank of gas — high octane government subsidies for ailing industries — it will speed along the highway good as new. Reagan's model applies to the United States of the 1830s, when the Jacksonian Democrats fought the National Bank's restrictions on credit for westward expansion. Mondale's model applies best to the 1950s, when fiscal fine-tuning and a few well-directed subsidies kept the economy moving forward.

But unbeknownst to either Reagan or Mondale, the United States has entered a new economic era, dominated on one hand by fierce international competition, and on the other by a new computer technology that is revolutionizing the rules of the economic road. The rapid introduction of computer automation has changed the most basic assumptions of modern economic policy — the relationship between jobs and economic growth. Both Mondale and Reagan assume that producing more steel bars, washing machines, and hamburgers will create more jobs. The 1984 Democratic platform states that economic growth "means security, opportunity, and hope." But as a result of computerization, economic

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growth could mean fewer jobs — and greater insecurity and fear. The same programs that in past eras increased jobs could decrease them.

Americans have a choice, but it is not between Reagan's and Mondale's economics. It is between an economics based on bygone models of industry and one that comes to terms with the post-industrial world of robotics and computer-aided design. By ignoring both the promise and the threat of automation, we risk realizing only the threat — widespread technological unemployment leading possibly to a deep recession, and even a depression. By seeking to understand post-industrial change, we make it more likely that we will realize the *promise* of automation — the dramatic reduction of the work week, and an increase in our opportunities for leisure, education, political participation, and artistic creation.

THE FIRST computer, ENIAC, built at the end of World War II, weighed thirty tons and was primarily used by the military. But in 1971, the microcomputer was introduced. One inexpensively produced silicon chip, smaller than a fingernail, could perform twenty times as many calculations as the 18,000-tube ENIAC. Beginning in the 1970s, computer-aided-manufacture, robotics, and office automation spread through Japan, the U.S., and Western Europe, and began to revolutionize the economic process.

Waves of technological change have occurred before. In the 1920s, through the introduction of electricity, assembly line production, and the tractor combine, farms and factories rapidly expanded their output, while reducing their total labor force. But the pace of change in the next decades will exceed that of the 1920s. Computerization drastically reduces the need for labor not only in manufacturing and agriculture, but also in sales and services. It virtually eliminates the human contribution to its own production. *Fortune* described this advanced Japanese plant for producing robots and computer-controlled machine tools:

> In Fanuc Ltd.'s cavernous, bumble bee yellow buildings . . . automatic machine cutters and robots typically toil unattended through the night, with only subdued warning lights flashing as unmanned delivery carts weave through the eerie semi-darkness. . . . The machinery operation, occupying 54,000 square feet, is supervised by a single controller, who watches the machines on a closed circuit TV.

The effect of computerization on jobs began to show up in Western Europe and Japan during the 1970s. The total number of hours that West German workers in the private sector spent on the job declined from 1965 to 1979. In the early 1960s, American trade unionists and intellectuals predicted that automation would begin reducing American jobs. But the computer's impact on the American economy was muted not only by the delay in miniaturization but also by the Vietnam War, by the rapid growth in the 1970s and 1980s of labor-intensive consumer services (e.g. fast food chains, hotels, and motels), and by the slowness of American firms to respond to competition from abroad. The impact was also concealed by the increase in part-time workers. From 1970 to 1982, the proportion of part-time workers in the total labor force increased by 57.9 percent.

But in the 1980s, the effects of computerization have begun to appear. American firms have begun to build the kind of virtually workerless factories that have become common in Japan. For instance, the Timken Corporation is building a new automated steel plant in Faircrest, Ohio, that will produce with 800 workers what it used to take 2,400 workers to produce. Down the road from this plant will be a 600-foot factory for tempering steel bars that will be manned by only four workers.

According to *Business Week*, two million manufacturing jobs were permanently lost during the 1981-82 recession. In the next decade, the factory work force will decline by 20 to 25 percent, says Thomas G. Gunn, an expert on automated factories for consultants Arthur D. Little. While output is expected to rise, as many as four million jobs will be lost.

Office work will also be affected. According to a study by consultants Booz, Allen, and Hamilton, computerization could eventually eliminate as many as 38 million office jobs in the U.S. A Georgia Institute of Technology study estimates that by the year 2000, clerical employment in the banking industry will drop by 39 percent, and in the insurance industry by 27 percent.

As jobs are eliminated by automation, some new jobs are created, but not enough to make up for the loss. Data Resources Inc. predicts that only one million new high tech jobs will be added in the 1980s. According to a study by the Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, the introduction of robots into automobile production will eliminate 50,000 auto workers' jobs, while adding only 3,000 to 5,000 new jobs. The greatest area of job growth will continue to be services — the job increases during the recent recovery have been entirely concentrated in the retail and wholesale trade, financial institutions, and other services, while employment in goods production has declined 5.5 percent from 1979 to the present. But as automation is introduced into services — for instance, automated bank tellers and automated medical testing — the growth of service employment should also begin to abate.

When the growth of the labor force is broken down into *total hours of employment* rather than the number of *jobs*, the decline in job growth becomes apparent. From 1960 to 1979, total annual employed hours increased by 2.9 percent a year, while from 1979 to July 1984 they increased less than 1 percent annually. At the same time, the labor force has been expanding annually at a faster rate than the economy creates full-time jobs.

While the number of eighteen-year-olds entering the labor force will not increase as rapidly as it did during the 1970s (when the baby boom generation came of age), the percentage of Americans who are actually in the labor force, or who would like to be, will continue to rise. The participation of married women and young people has been increasing, and is likely to continue increasing. Some analysts have argued that the rise in married women's participation in the labor force will decline, as large families and homemaking come back in vogue, but all

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of the evidence points in the opposite direction — towards a fundamental shift in cultural values away from the idea that women belong exclusively in the home.

The huge population of older Americans also appears less and less willing to accept early retirement. Recently, the mandatory retirement age has been increased to age seventy. With the increase in women's and young people's participation, and the growing reluctance of older people to retire added to the normal growth of the labor force, more and more people will be making claims on a job market that will not be growing proportionately.

GIVEN THESE TRENDS, the average rate of unemployment over periods of recession and recovery is likely to increase regardless of whether economic growth occurs. At 7.5 percent, the rate of unemployment during the present recovery is twice the rate of unemployment during the boom periods of the 1950s and 1960s. In the 1990s, unemployment could be as high as 12 percent during an *upturn* in the economy.

The problem can be restated in another way: In 1910 there were 1045 hours of paid work for each man, woman, and child in the U.S. By 1979, the figure had dropped to 814, even though Americans were producing far more goods and services. By the end of the century, it should drop to 650 hours or less. Those are the figures on hours of work per capita, that is, for each American whether in the labor force or not. But as already indicated, the percentage of the population in the labor force, or trying to be in the labor force, is growing. At the same time, a full-time, forty-hour-a-week worker in the U.S. presently clocks about 1900 hours annually. *If Americans continue to adhere to this definition of full-time work*, then unemployment could reach Great Depression levels by the year 2000. (See Box.)

But the threat posed by automation does not end here. Growing rates of technologically-caused unemployment can cause further unemployment. When workers at an automobile plant or telephone company lose their jobs because of automation and cannot find new jobs, they lose a substantial part of their income; consumer demand for the new products being produced drops; and unless foreign orders take up the slack, factories and offices begin cutting back, and more workers are laid off. A recession can spiral into a depression.

The Great Depression of the 1930s was caused partly by the technological advances of the 1920s. Farm and factory production increased over 40 percent during the decade, while the total number of workers declined. By the late 1920s, American companies found they were producing more goods than consumers could buy. When the world market also began to shrink, American firms began cutting back sharply — and the spiral of unemployment began.

In the 1980s, the impact of technological unemployment has been muted by the enormous growth in government programs like Social Security, and in government jobs. These expenitures, which include the Reagan administration's arms build-up, have kept the bottom from falling out of the economy.

But over the next fifteen years, these programs could prove insufficient to that task. As international competition intensifies, the pressure to automate will grow. To prevent a sharp rise in unemployment and drop in consumer demand, the administrations in power will have to increase drastically the government's contribution to the economy. But such a step runs directly counter to the prevailing wisdom among Republicans and Democrats.

Reagan sees the American economy through the rose-colored prism of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century economists who believed that government intervention was the principal cause of economic instability and recession. He views any increase in government spending and deficits as a threat to the private economy. Mondale and the Democrats have begun to accept this view. While they understand the

IF WE ASSUME that automation will reduce the total amount of employment per capita at 1 percent a year — a reasonable assumption if history is a guide — how much work will there be in 1999? Beginning with 1979 data on the total hours of work in the U.S. economy — including self-employment — and assuming only a modest increase in labor force participation to 50 percent of the population, it turns out that there will be only 1302 hours of work per each member of the labor force. The four options below give a sense of different ways in which this work *could* be distributed among full-time work, part-time work, and unemployment. The result is clear: to avoid drastic increases in unemployment, there will have to be sharp reductions in the full-time work year.

EXTRAPOLATION OF HOURS FOR 1999

Percentage of labor force working full-time, part-time, or not at all	1302 hours per member of labor force
OPTION A	
10% unemployed	0
45% half-time	868
45% full-time	1736 (36.2 hrs. for 48 weeks)
OPTION B	
0% unemployed	0
60% part-time	930
40% full-time	1860 (38.8 hrs. for 48 weeks)
OPTION C	
25% unemployed	0
25% part-time	781
50% full-time	1562 (32.5 hrs. for 48 weeks)
OPTION D	
Equal sharing by all members of the labor force	1302 (28 hrs. for 46.5 weeks)

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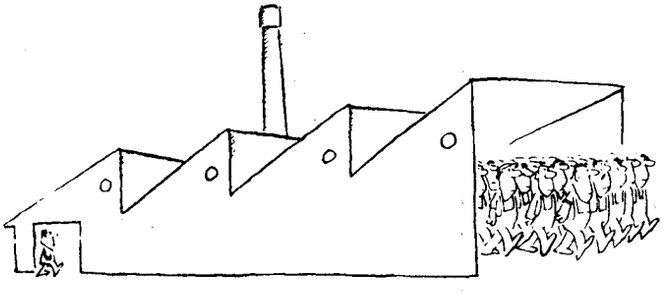
private economy will buck wildly if simply left to its own devices, they have accepted the Republican view that deficits are the principal cause of America's ills. Both Reagan and Mondale do not understand that deficits are partly a byproduct of the government's attempt to cushion the economy from rising unemployment. They mistake cause for effect.

Even within the labor movement and women's and civil rights organizations, there is scant understanding of either the promise or threat of automation. While the regular Democrats were meeting last June to draft Mondale's platform, a group of labor, women's, and civil rights leaders, convened by former United Auto Workers' President Douglas Fraser, were meeting a mile away to draft "new economic alternatives for full employment." Fraser's group understood the necessity of supplementing the private sector with massive public initiative. But 1930s-style full employment will be impossible in the society computers are creating. *It may not even be desirable.* If the balanced budget has been the Republicans' will o' the wisp, full employment has become so for progressive and left-wing Democrats.

We can either ignore post-industrial change and risk a spiral of recession, or we can allow automation to improve our economic well-being by reshaping the way in which the government and economy are organized and the way in which work, income, and leisure are distributed. At a bare minimum, a new administration that wanted to come to terms with automation would have to initiate three kinds of programs that are presently viewed as either utopian or counterproductive.

- First, an administration would have to sponsor legislation to reduce the work week. It makes no sense for thousands of autoworkers to be working compulsory overtime while thousands of others are forced to accept the compulsory leisure of unemployment.
- Second, an administration would not only have to expand government social services, and public works, but also adopt a guaranteed annual income to provide economic security — without stigma — for all Americans, and establish a floor beneath which consumer demand could not fall.
- Third, an administration would have to sponsor a major new education program — on the order of the G.I. Bill — that would allow workers to keep pace throughout their lives with the growing velocity of technological change.

BUT GOVERNMENT initiative is only one aspect of the adjustment to a post-industrial society. To enjoy the promise of automation, we have to abandon our most deep-seated assumptions about life and work. Not only will we have to accept that income is no longer strictly dependent on work, but that such activities as raising children, going to school, painting a picture, and serving on a local utility board are as socially important and necessary as working on a farm or assembly line.



Other countries have already taken steps that implicitly recognize the transition to a post-industrial society. Sweden has provided generous paid maternity and paternity leave for its workers. In West Germany, adults who have been displaced by technological change are eligible for three years of government-financed retraining. In Canada, groups of unemployed workers can win government grants for socially useful activities. And in many Western European countries, there are provisions for flexible working hours, including measures that allow individuals to shift to half-time work without losing benefits or opportunities for advancement.

But these societies as well as ours balk at taking major steps toward a post-industrial order. When the West German metalworkers' union proposed a thirty-five-hour work week, both government and business united against them, and West Germany endured its most bitter strike since 1945.

American and Western European resistance to meeting the challenge of computer automation is not only based on outmoded views of government and the economy. It also reflects the way in which economic decisions are made. Both businesses and unions make their major decisions privately and individually without reference to national well-being. Viewed from this perspective, businesses will resist adjustments to the workweek as much as unions will resist the introduction of job-reducing automation. It is not in their interest to do otherwise.

In the United States, long strikes and protracted negotiations have taken place over the introduction of automation into the printing industry, steel plants, loading docks, and auto and tire plants. The unions have tried to slow the pace of change, while the companies have thwarted union attempts to adjust to change. During the last recession, both the auto and tire companies forced their unions to give up reductions of the workweek that they had previously won. According to the UAW, the autoworkers' concessions cost workers at General Motors and Ford 15,000 jobs.

If the basic decisions about post-industrial change continue to be made privately in company board rooms and through industry-by-industry collective bargaining, then Americans will find themselves at the mercy of the swift current of change. We might make it to shore, but we also might capsize and drown.

In the 1930s and 1940s, faced with the realization that the unregulated free market could create massive depressions, Americans changed their view of how government should relate to the economy. We created a new industrial order that horrified the Coolidge and Hoover Republicans, but that provided the underpinning for thirty years of unparalleled prosperity.

In the 1980s and 1990s, Americans face no less formidable a challenge. The risks of inaction are even higher.

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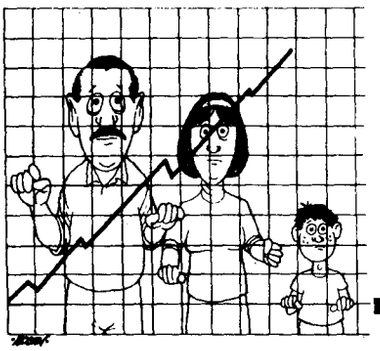

The undiscussable assumption

JAMES B. RULE

ONE MANIFESTATION of the rightward trend in American public life has been the decline in serious thinking about economic growth. A topic of spirited debate in the 1960s and early 1970s, today the growth of the economy is a subject once again mired in economic clichés and socio-political obfuscation. Nowhere has this been more evident than in the presidential campaign. For both Reagan and Mondale — and before them, Hart — the primacy of growth has been an unquestioned goal; the only thing worth debating, it would seem, is whose policies are more likely to produce it. Apparently we have lost the ability to discriminate among *kinds* of economic growth and to reflect on the principles underlying *distribution* of the fruits of economic achievement.

Increasingly we hear that the 1980s resemble the 1950s — as Americans allegedly turn cautious, conservative, worried about their own and their children's futures, and above all narrowly materialistic in their personal aspirations. The fifties were a period of economic growth, with the incomes of most American families gradually rising to unprecedented heights. Any skepticism about the basic premises of American political economy had to withstand what were seemingly self-evident lessons in the country's worldwide political and economic ascendance. American economic prowess was seen as tantamount to a kind of divine favor that went along with new world responsibilities. At the personal level, material consumption was the key indicator of success and self-fulfillment.

The protest movements of the 1960s turned the values of the 1950s on their heads. Again, prosperity and economic growth were deeply implicated. Part of the attack came in ecological and technological terms. Americans increasingly saw that the growth of industrial capacity had its ugly side, that what economists disregarded as "externalities" could amount to unusable rivers, unsightly countryside, real hazards to health, and other environmental atrocities. People began to conceive of the earth's bounty as a zero-sum resource, and to view the limits of industrial expansion within fixed possibilities. Instead of debating how fast the world's poor countries could be propelled into the world of industrial development, some people began to worry whether the closed system of "spaceship Earth" could absorb the global expansion of industrial activity that planners were projecting.

But the sixties brought some still more damning indictments. These were the attacks on the values of materialism as the standard of private and public good—often launched by the young of precisely those strata which had devoted themselves most fully, and most successfully, to the gods of rising consumption standards. The counter-culture, with varying degrees of seriousness, demanded simpler, less ostentatious ways of life, and greater concern with the quality of non-material things. Among college students, interest in business careers plummeted; consumption was held to be the root of all social evils rather than a source of well-being. Simultaneously, social critics raised questions about economic *distribution* forgotten in more conservative eras. Wouldn't we all have enough, people asked, if only the material bounty of America's incredible industrial capacities were shared more decently?

Perhaps never before had material prosperity been subjected to systematic scorn by such a broad and articulate sector of Americans. And yet the 1960s were also a time of continuing real growth in the economy. What people could take for granted, apparently, they felt safe in assailing.

The middle seventies brought something new. The growth machine faltered. The unending flow of cheap oil, life-blood of an industrial economy, suddenly could no longer be assumed as a given. We experienced the ravages of stagflation, that hybrid from the economic bestiary of two evil creatures which had never been expected to mate. Now people confronted the prospects of zero-sum economic possibilities with a new sense that the era of virtually automatic economic growth might *really* be over. Disdain for economic growth and personal affluence promptly evaporated. More than that. Americans seemed to be asking anxiously, "Will I get mine?" If the economy is not going to produce more for everybody, what can I do to ensure that I, at least, will get a better-than-average cut? This is an ungenerous mood, and it is still with us.

RONALD REAGAN'S political successes have stemmed largely from his ability to convince people that the forces he represents may again start up the growth machine — if only they are given full charge. Along the way, Americans have all too willingly accepted the nostrum that a rising gross national

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product offers the only hope for a more decent life for those at the bottom of the social heap. Increasingly aware of the profound failures of the Eastern European centrally-directed economies to ensure material well-being, people who should know better draw a crude and desperate conclusion: let us turn our economic affairs over to the most unreconstructed forces of private enterprise. We must again have growth — do what it takes, no questions asked.

These dreary conclusions are embodied in a lock-step series of assumptions:

1. That economic growth is of a piece; either we have it, or we don't. If we foster more growth, we will all be better off; if not, we will lose ground.

2. The only way of raising the economic level of the worst-off groups in society is by steps which make the best-off still better-off.

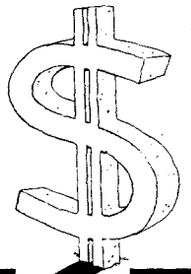
3. Hence the only important question is what policies will make the rich richer; the most the rest of us can hope for is to share — however modestly — in their gains.

These assumptions are so outrageously simplistic that perhaps no one would defend them in this form. Yet from the tenor of public debate, one might conclude that all these propositions were received wisdom. Just as opponents of a more generous society have sought to convince us that government programs to assist the poor have always been foredoomed, they would have us believe that only capitulation to the declared needs of big business can ensure economic well-being.

There is no reason to accept the stultifying either-or vision of growth presented above. On the contrary, we need to reopen the question of what *kind* of growth we want and need. This means taking a hard look at different economic policies in terms of their capacity for generating employment, and the quality of the work and other social relations so generated. It means looking critically at the distribution of benefits of economic growth throughout society. It is no more true today than it has ever been that a decent living for those at the bottom of the social heap must wait on the extravagant self-enrichment of those at the top. The differences in wealth and earnings between the most and least privileged Americans — extreme by the standards of many Western democracies — deserve critical public debate, no less than the national debt or policies for reducing interest rates. And finally, we need critical examination of the likely costs and benefits of different kinds of growth in terms of the world environment. We must not simply assume that to have better pre-natal care we must accept acid rain, or that to find ways for the third world to feed itself we must accept the unlimited domination of agribusiness.

In short, we need to reject both the blanket scorn of growth and consumption of the sixties, and the mean-spirited, crudely materialistic thinking prevailing in the last few years. Economic growth on the old pattern — growth on any terms, at any cost — is at most a palliative to the most profound hazards and conflicts or our age. These problems turn not on questions of how much wealth will be ours and what is the most promising way to get it, but of what kind of society we want to be and what kind of world we want to leave to our children.

FAITH & ECONOMICS: GETTING BEHIND THE CONCEPTS



Economics & Christian values

PRENTISS L. PEMBERTON & DANIEL RUSH FINN

IT IS QUITE natural that in dealing with economic problems Christians should depend heavily on the discipline of economics for a description of the situation. Thoughtful believers have long ago ceased ignoring the social or natural sciences simply because they are "secular."

At the same time, however, the use in Christian ethics of the insights of economics is not so simple and straightforward as most economists believe. Within the discipline of economics it is usually assumed that while economists as ordinary citizens have their own values and convictions, when they act as scientists they are only supposed to describe what is going on in the economy. They are supposed to leave to others the use of that description in judging whether what is happening ought to go on. Most economists see themselves as providing description, not prescription; as social scientists, they want to leave to others the choice about what to value. If things really were this simple, life would be a lot easier. But the economist's usual understanding of the relation of economic science and human values runs into difficulties on two levels.

At the most obvious level, a problem is posed by the fact that on a large number of important issues economists as scientists

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debate among themselves as to what is going on in the economic realm. Are the major oil companies exacerbating the energy problem for higher profits or is just OPEC to blame? Does less unemployment cause more inflation or must one of these problems be solved before the other will get better? Are multinational firms the best hope for development in the third world or do they actually cause underdevelopment? As we listen to economists from the right, left, and center we can hear different answers to these questions about what is going on in the economy.

At a deeper level, however, we find that in the very process of trying to describe what is (and trying to avoid the question of what ought to be), the economist starts with some basic assumptions which are value-laden and not value-free. In addition, since these assumptions are starting points, they are unproved and, at least within the science of economics, are unprovable. In fact, many of the disputes among different "schools" of economists — conservative, liberal, radical — can be traced to different starting assumptions. Differing schools of economic thought look at the same world, but see it differently. They consequently come to different recommendations for economic policy. To be sure each of these many descriptions of economic life has some degree of truth to it, an empirical investigation is always crucial. But the fact remains that different starting points and conflicting visions of the world need to be weighed against each other. It is our contention that the basic insights of the Christian tradition must be employed in assessing the adequacy of those assumptions which operate below the surface of economic description.

Most economists in the United States share a set of assumptions about the human person and economic activity. Technically speaking, these assumptions are a part of the "neoclassical" school of economics. We will simply refer to this as "mainstream" or "orthodox" economic theory. Employing this approach, economists have made highly valuable contributions to the well-being of people here and abroad. At the same time, however, orthodox economic science has had significant negative effects — effects which economists themselves often overlook. Examine, if you will, five basic economic categories of mainstream economics, and you will see how the Christian tradition requires a critique and expansion of each concept.

1. Scarcity

Mainstream economists today universally take "scarcity" as the fundamental problem with which economics is concerned. The orthodox definition of economic science is "the study of the allocation of scarce resources to achieve alternative ends." For example, with limits on the amount of iron ore and labor available for making steel, we must choose between more tractors or more autos, between more military tanks or more steel girders for buildings. What people would like to have always exceeds what is available. This is what the economist means technically by scarcity.

However, there is a serious problem in taking this definition of scarcity as a starting point for economic science. Nearly everyone sees that "scarcity" is the fundamental problem of economics, but the ordinary person's notion is different from the economist's use of the term. In everyday terms, scarcity refers to not having enough to live a fully human life. This concern over scarcity is represented in fears about whether the food and housing bills can be paid, whether a Social Security pension will be sufficient, whether the unemployed worker can find a job, whether the malnourished child of the third world will live past the age of twelve. The shortcoming of the economist's definition of scarcity is that all these concerns are grouped together in the same category with a desire for ever-larger stereo speakers and ever-longer boats for recreation.

The economist is right in pointing out that people's wants exceed what is available, but this conceals an even more important insight. For economists, the problem of scarcity applies to commodities: the inability of a family to buy food is treated in economics in the same manner as the inability of a family to purchase a yacht. For nearly everyone else, it is untrue to say that a well-to-do family that wishes it could afford a yacht is experiencing the same kind of scarcity as the poor family that wishes it could afford a balanced diet. From the point of view of the Judeo-Christian tradition, scarcity as deprivation, as the lack of what it takes to live a full life, is an evil which all in the community have the responsibility to eliminate. Scarcity as the gap between unlimited wants and what is available, however, is a sign of human greed, something that the Bible has always referred to as the sin of covetousness.

M. Douglas Meeks has argued (in the November 10, 1980 issue of *Christianity and Crisis*) that the economist's preoccupation with scarcity contradicts a truly Trinitarian conception of economics because it overlooks what the New Testament calls the "pleroma" or fullness of God's gifts in the Spirit. This is not to deny that multitudes live in destitution but rather to point out that there is enough to go round if justice prevails. Justice here would imply not only a redistribution of wealth but a realignment of the production system so that, for example, the best agricultural land in the third world would be used to produce basic food for domestic consumption and not the more profitable cash crops grown for export to the industrialized world.

Thus, an ethical assessment of economic arguments will confirm the view that scarcity is a crucial economic problem, but not primarily in the way economists generally mean it. Scarcity as physical poverty is often underrated by economists. Scarcity as the excess of wants over available goods is important but not important enough to render it the starting point of the study of economic life. We do need to choose among alternative ends in the allocation of scarce resources but the most real sense of scarcity is missed if we treat all wants as equally significant. Of course, economists do

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ultimately make a distinction between different kinds of "wants": some are backed up by expenditures of money and are fulfilled while others are not. In order to understand this difference, we need to examine the economist's notion of the market.

2. The market

Mainstream economists appreciate "the market." They mean, of course, not the corner store, but that series of social interactions between people who have something which others want and those others who are willing to pay in order to get it. The original "owners" (say manufacturers with goods or laborers with their labor power) look for the best offer for their product or service, while the buyers (say consumers or employers) look for the lowest priced source of what they seek. Competition (with other sellers) keeps owners from charging too much, while competition (with other buyers) keeps each buyer from being able to force sellers to lower their prices unduly. In addition, the hope of profits entices producers to make new products which consumers would like to have. The "free market" — unencumbered by government restrictions — is viewed as a marvelous mechanism for setting national economic priorities without the need for national debate. Consumers' value systems determine where the nation puts its time and resources.

The assumptions implicit in such confidence in the market have been criticized from both secular and religious points of view. The first problem is that wealthy consumers can fulfill far more of their wants than the poor can. Thus, relying on the market to determine what goods the nation will produce allows the wealthy a far greater voice in setting national economic priorities. Our own society, let alone various third-world ones, is characterized by a great disparity in yearly income between the rich and poor, and an even more alarming difference in wealth (the dollar value of the property a person owns at the end of the year). Economists will admit that if the current distribution of income between the rich and the poor is judged to be a bad one from the moral point of view, then the national economic priorities set in the free market will also be wrong until a redistribution of wealth and income is achieved. It is quite clear that the Christian principle of the just entitlement of the poor does in fact require such a redistribution. The obvious conclusion from this moral assessment is that although the market mechanism may be employed to achieve certain goals, Christians cannot have a naïve confidence in market outcomes.

A good number of economists — particularly "conservative" economists — are caught in a problem here. In spite of the concessions just cited, many advocates of the market oppose programs of income redistribution on the grounds that only poverty (euphemistically called "market forces") will provide enough incentive for the poor to exert themselves. This stance bespeaks some important and questionable assumptions about the human person and self-interest which we will examine later.

A second problem raised by relying heavily on the market is the implicit assumption that the firms in the marketplace actually do compete with each other. We need not deal with the technical economic definition of "perfect competition" here, but let us note that most economists do recognize that in many industries, the few very large firms which dominate the industry often do not fully compete with each other in spite of the ideal of competition of the free market. Explicit collusion and outright price-fixing by firms is, of course, illegal in the United States, but there are more subtle ways to "administer" prices. A significant example of such behavior is "price leadership," a procedure described even in introductory economics textbooks as prevalent in the American steel industry. One firm announces a price increase to be effective at some future date, and the other firms then generally announce the same price rise effective on the same date. Now and then the first firm is out of line and it later alters its price change to match what the other firms are doing. This adjustment process occurs about four times a year and effectively eliminates much competition (which the firms euphemistically call "cut-throat" competition) where one firm might lower its prices to attract more customers. There are other ways that competition can be and is reduced, but the point here is that to the extent that competition *is* reduced, economists themselves admit that the operation of the market will produce less than optimal results.

At another level it is important to question the wisdom of relying on the market mechanism to set national economic priorities even if we were first to solve the problems of the deprivation of the poor and the failures of competition among firms. Advocates of the market appreciate, first, its automatic operation (no bureaucracy has to act before market adjustments occur) and, second, its impersonal operation (no person or group gets to decide what adjustments are ultimately made). The first of these claims involves the notion of "efficiency" to which we shall return presently. The second — the impersonality of the market — raises a very important question for Christian ethics: is an occurrence better simply because no person or group decided it should happen?

To answer this question it is important to see why proponents of the market respond by saying "Yes." Many of them, though not all, would argue that any person's values or ethical positions are simply personal subjective preferences. If this were true, then a policy decision by Congress or a government agency or a neighborhood council would be just an expression of preferences of the people in that group (and of any others who might be able to have some influence over them). In case of a shortage of gasoline, for example, rather than allowing a government agency to ration gas "arbitrarily," proponents of

COMING: Segundo Galilea offers a liberation theologian's reflections on economic development in India and the United States. Carol Coston, O.P., reports on efforts by religious investors to encourage alternative forms of economic organization. Plus responses to the draft of the bishops' pastoral.

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the market would advocate allowing the price of gas to rise to whatever price would induce consumers to reduce the amount they demand so there would be enough gas to go round.

The tradition of Christian ethics has consistently rejected the first step of this argument. Christianity has always denied the assumption that values are just personal preferences. While it may not always be easy to decide what is the morally best course of action, the careful decision of a deliberative body ought not be dismissed as just the efforts of one more "interest group." Some values *are* better than others, and sincere discussion in a group can improve a decision.

Not only does Christian ethics have greater respect for group decisions about the common good than do proponents of the market, the Christian tradition has analogously put less confidence in the initial preferences of individuals than do those same market advocates. While the latter have no standard by which to judge consumers' wants, Christian ethics has always held that some values — like food and shelter — are more basic and more important than others — like luxury consumption. Therefore, the market choices of consumers with money to spend may not be the best basis on which to determine what the economy should produce. In fact, if a decision had to be made about basic economic questions, the discussion and debate about priorities might well change many people's original personal "preferences" (hopefully for the better).

The Christian tradition has never granted ultimate value to the immediate inclination of individuals. Proponents of the market often call this "paternalistic" or "totalitarian." For Christians and others, it is a matter of public morality. Although the action of the free market might at times achieve the best outcome, it does not necessarily do so. This is by no means to say that Christian ethics endorses the excesses of bureaucracy that occur in totalitarian forms of socialism, but rather to assert that major questions of economic priority should be carefully weighed, debated, and decided upon in the light of fundamental moral values.

3. Efficiency

Economists — and just about all other human beings — value efficiency. No one thinks inefficiency is a good idea. So it is particularly difficult for well-meaning people to respond when in response to proposals for humanizing our economy they hear: "That sounds nice but it is quite inefficient." What is efficiency and how is it related to moral concern?

Economists define efficiency as getting the greatest possible production out of any given amount of resources available. Alternatively, it can be seen as achieving any particular goal at the least possible cost in effort and resources. At a sort of common sense level, this is quite straightforward. Problems appear as we dig deeper. Consider two alternate procedures for, say, making steel: an older process and a more recently developed one which is more "efficient." The term "efficient" here means that the newer process produces steel at a lower cost per ton than does the old one. Now, however, consider two alternatives for a steel plant where the only difference between them is that one has a series of complex devices costing $300 million in its smokestacks to reduce pollution by 90 percent while the other simply releases untreated smoke into the air. Which is more "efficient"? Clearly the second plant will appear to produce a ton of steel at a lower "cost" since from the point of view of the firm the costs paid by citizens who must breathe polluted air are not part of the firm's calculation of the "cost" of a ton of steel.

This particular case is a good example of the economic problem of "externalities" which we will examine further on; but like many other examples, it demonstrates the flaw in the usual use of the word "efficiency." In practice, that word generally includes only those costs of production which are measured in dollars and cents in the market. Although the steel mill with pollution control devices must pay for them, the mill with no such device need not pay for the privilege of imposing costs on people living downwind. Thus it is that many have complained about government pollution regulations because they reduce the "efficiency" of American firms. The advantages of lower pollution levels get lost in this casual use of the term.

To be fair to economists here, we must note that the discipline of economics does clearly recognize that the negative effects of polluted air are indeed costs of producing steel — even if the steel mill doesn't have to pay those costs. This particular misuse of the term "efficiency" is most frequent among people in business and financial circles. Still, most economists do periodically lapse from a careful use of the term — as the next example shows.

Today we can see that the gas guzzlers of the 1950s and 1960s were very inefficient in their use of gasoline, although they were nonetheless "efficient" economically since gas was so cheap at that time. Even now, after our energy prices have risen dramatically, we still pay much less for gasoline, heating oil, and other forms of energy than people in Europe and most other places on the globe. The economist will define efficiency in energy consumption with respect to the market price of energy even though from an ethical point of view other concerns, like the availability of resources to future generations, may loom large in the assessment.

Fundamentally, then, the word "efficiency" is forced to do double duty and is misused in the process. The economist wants to use it in a value-free way — to designate achieving any goal with the least effort and use of resources. But even though the idea could apply to any goal and could include all costs, in practice both the goals sought and the costs considered are usually limited to those items which have a price tag designated in the market. The "efficient solution" to an economic problem is generally equivalent to "the market solution."

When Christians reflect on the possibilities for an economic ethic in the modern world, they must keep "efficiency" in perspective. Any time human values are involved which are not adequately represented in the market place — human dignity, the rights of future generations, the interests of the poor, etc. — then an efficient attainment of those goals may look remarkably inefficient from the point of view of the

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market. Once such values are incorporated into the list of society's goals, even orthodox economists often concede that only government intervention or activities by other non-market forces can improve on the deficiencies of the market.

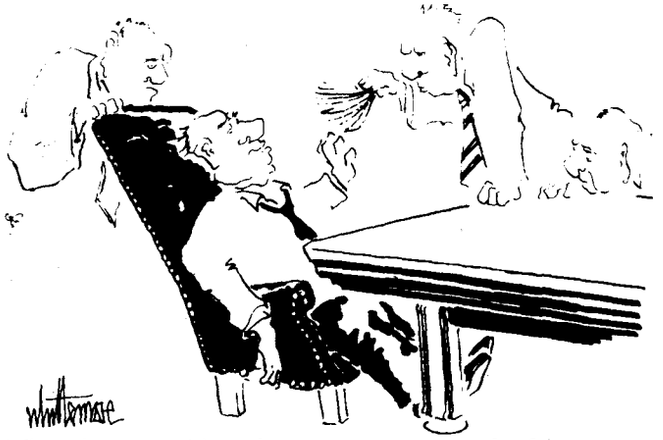
4. Property

In an effort to describe the economic situation without making a moral judgment about whether it is good or bad, orthodox economists have generally taken the institutional framework of the U.S. economy as given and have proceeded to analyze its workings. As a result, economists operate with the same assumptions about property as do most people in modern industrial society. They generally work with the understanding of private property deriving from the work of John Locke.

Most of us are already familiar with the conflict between the assertion of nearly absolute authority of the owner over the thing owned and the Judeo-Christian insight into possession as stewardship. This disparity requires a rethinking of some of the usual rights and claims of ownership. This, in turn, will affect behavior on an individual and on an institutional level.

One of the moral problems arising most frequently within current American economic institutions is the clash between moral principles and the charter of the firm to produce a profit. From the point of view of the individual manager facing a difficult decision, this is most often felt as a clash between his or her "own" values and a responsibility to the stockholders who have a right to a significant return on their investment. Once, however, we realize that ownership entails not only rights but also the duty to use possessions responsibly, the manager could be allowed as great a discretion in fulfilling the moral responsibilities of the firm as he or she has in creatively seeking a profit.

When we step back and look at the larger issues in the economy, we find that this notion of a more limited ownership has equally important implications. In the last section we saw the example of air pollution by a steel mill. The usual presumption in our competitive society is that one person's rights will act as a limit on the excesses of others. No one is allowed to dump refuse on a neighbor's property, and if someone tries to do this, the neighbor can sue in court. But the release of toxic gases into the air by the plant is not challenged in the courts on the grounds of violation of ownership rights since no one person "owns" the atmosphere. When the system of competing rights breaks down in cases like this, only direct action by government can alleviate pollution.



"I'm okay . . . it's only a momentary attack of corporate guilt."

We should note that from the point of view of the steel company — operating with Locke's notion of property — the government's action appears to be an external and arbitrary limit on its rights. We can even hear assertions that government has "imposed" hundreds of billions of dollars in costs on U.S. business.

Yet, if we really do believe the Judeo-Christian vision of all things as created for the good of humanity, then the atmosphere (like the rivers, lakes, and oceans) is not presumed to be a cost-free dumping ground. Pollution is seen as piracy of the good. If it costs $300 million to reduce a steel mill's pollution to "acceptable" levels, then this amount ought not be seen as a cost imposed on business. Rather, it is a measure, to put it kindly, of the subsidy the firm had previously been receiving from the public in allowing the pollution to go on. More strikingly, it is a measure of legalized theft as real as if the firm had, through a loophole in the law, been allowed to dump solid waste on a neighbor's land.

To widen the context even further, we can consider our nation's role in the international discussions about mining the floor of the world's oceans. At a number of conferences on a "law of the sea," the vast majority of the nations of the world have been calling for a special status for the oceans so that while they may be mined they cannot be "owned" absolutely. A world fund for developing nations could be established by a tax on all such mining. Many in the United States, however, have objected to this notion and, following John Locke, want to assert an absolute right for the firms who do the mining. (See, for example the article on "Locke and the Law of the Sea" in *Commonweal*, June, 1981.) The Christian vision of property points toward some sort of communal possession of these extra-national resources.

The "law of the sea" raises questions about economic structures of ownership in a situation where they are yet to be designed for the first time. The Christian economic ethic should also have a transforming impact on existing institutions of property ownership. The Christian tradition on its own does not provide ahead of time any exact definition of how a particular institution like the firm should be structured; the details can only be worked out in an actual historical situation. Still, it seems clear that the firm ought not be viewed solely or even primarily as an organization of investors or owners who hire employees to perform certain tasks. Rather, the firm is an organization of persons of many sorts who have come together to produce goods or services for the benefit of themselves and the rest of society. Seeing the firm in this way and understanding the limits to private property, there is no reason why the ultimate decisions about the firm should be made by stockholders only. It would seem reasonable, for example, for the board of directors of a firm to be elected not just by the

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stockholders but by blue-collar workers and lower-level managers as well as upper management. In addition, some representation of consumers and of society as a whole would be very important since in spite of the best of intentions, there will always be a tendency for the common self-interest of employees and investors to overshadow the rights and needs of persons outside the firm. Various arrangements would have to be tried and tested; some such attempts (entitled "co-determination") are currently being made in West Germany and elsewhere. Although a more limited sense of private property is not sufficient to spell out new institutional forms precisely, it does indicate the direction in which to move.

5. The human person and self-interest

The fifth (and last) element we will investigate may not look like an economic category at all. Economists are not in the business of developing and proving theories about human nature. They would like to leave that to philosophers and theologians. Still, in order to think about how people act and react as consumers and producers, economists work with a model of the human person. Mainstream economists think of the person as a "rational maximizer." That is, every individual has a set of preferences or values, and some amount of wealth and natural ability. Using these financial and personal resources, the individual tries to fulfill those preferences to the greatest extent possible.

"Self-interest" is an important part of this understanding of the human person, but it is not always defined or understood clearly by either economists or their critics. On the one hand, the economists' official conception of "self-interest" does not mean that the individual engages in only "selfish" behavior. Some individuals value charitable actions, the economist explains, and thus those individuals get a kind of psychological "return" for activity which assists others. In the language of economics, individuals gain "utility" from actions they choose to undertake, whether those actions include buying heroin for themselves or working as a volunteer at a community service agency. We will return to this notion later, but let us here note that this position can be well described as "psychological egoism," the belief that while not all behavior is consciously "selfish" in the narrow sense, all behavior is ultimately "self-interested."

On the other hand, most mainstream economists believe that the "self-interest" of individuals is so strong that capitalism (which is based on each individual's looking out for his or her own interests) is not only morally better but is more feasible than socialism (which they feel requires that individuals act counter to their narrow self-interest since the government organizes economic activity). Although in orthodox economic theory the category of "self-interest" ought to cover altruistic or charitable acts as well as narrowly hedonistic or self-seeking ones, in practice those economists who judge capitalism to be more feasible than socialism on the grounds just stated in the text are making some assumption about the content (and not just the form) of the self-interest of most people. The assumption is that among the elements in this "self-interest," the "selfish" ones outweigh the "altruistic" ones. It is this belief that selfish activity predominates that leads many proponents of capitalism to oppose any significant redistribution of income to the poor on the grounds that it would tend to destroy the incentive to work.

The Judeo-Christian vision of the human person is more communal than all this. The person is recognized to be constituted in a social setting. The idea of self-interest is treated more subtly. Mainstream economics can say that all actions have some end or goal, and that this end is an interest of the self who takes that action. But this sense of "self-interest" isn't very interesting. Christianity has, rather carefully, made the commonsense distinction between actions where the intended beneficiary is the self (self-interested in the sense of "selfish") and actions where the intended beneficiary is another person or group. The Christian tradition has always recognized the excesses of sin. But where capitalism counts on competition from other self-interested persons to hold self-interest in check, Christianity has always held out two additional prescriptions: a personal change of heart, and institutionalized requirements and restrictions. The individual can be exhorted to a less selfish way of living, and the structures of the community can be molded so that the basic needs of all persons are met and the self-interest of individuals corresponds more closely with the common good.

In fact, Christianity has always denounced any attempt to base social organization on self-interest alone. Behind this stance is an appreciation for the power of human sinfulness. In its critique of every social and economic system, Christian ethics points out the way those persons with power (i.e., "wealth" under capitalism) can subvert the usual checks and balances, can gain their own ends, and can legitimate this by showing how "just" it is since they are not breaking any laws. In a careful study entitled *Economic Foundations of Political Power* (The Free Press, 1973), Randall Bartlett has demonstrated how an economic system based on individuals asserting their self-interest will, in the modern, uncertain world, subvert any democratic government and will render it a servant of vested economic interests.

> Government actions will preserve the economic *status quo* since they arise from patterns of influence generated by the operation of the economic system. In a system such as we have described, the actions of self-interested, rational agents operating in an uncertain world will — rightly or wrongly — cause the structure of political power to rise from a firm economic foundation. This structure and its foundation are inseparable.

At the same time as it challenges the foundations of capitalism, the Christian tradition also chides that naïveté of those Marxists who would hope to eliminate human sinfulness simply by restructuring the economy. While the human person may, over generations, be shaped into a less competitive, less anxious, and less self-interested being than has been the case under capitalism, the doctrine of original sin recognizes that the human condition shall never be free of a tendency to sinful forms of self-assertion.

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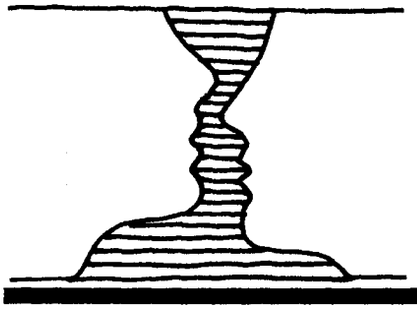

On not skipping the sermon

JAMES CARROLL

WHEN I WAS a boy I loved to stand in the back of the church with the men. This was in Alexandria, Virginia, and the men of our parish were a varied lot. Some like my father worked in nearby Washington for the federal government, but most practiced the trades or worked at blue-collar jobs which was more typical of the place Catholic men occupied in American society at the time. This was just before that first huge crop of young Catholic veterans on the G.I. Bill graduated from college, found jobs, wives, and houses in the suburbs, and changed American Catholic life forever.

But before that happened kids like me learned in parishes everywhere that women went to the brightly lit front pews and men hovered in the shadowy rear corner between the purple draped confessional and the car-sized hissing radiator. I imitated them, leaning against the wall, arms folded, then dropping to one knee at the *Sanctus* bells and staying abjectly hunched over until it was time for the women to receive communion and us men to leave. One moment in particular stands out in my memory of those Masses, and that was the instant between the priest's finishing the Latin reading of the day's Gospel and his turning around to face us, to read the same passage in English and preach his sermon. In that instant the men around me slipped out the side door like burglars, and for the duration of the priest's sermon they huddled on the steps outside, smoking cigarettes. And I, awed by their daring, nevertheless remained in the church, stunned by the discovery that these men, exemplary Catholics who wouldn't have thought of missing Mass or eating meat on Friday, had nothing to learn from Father. Not that they were anti-clerical in the style of European men or that they didn't regard the clergy with great respect, but simply that the sermon was considered as addressed to the women and children. Women's and children's lives were what priests knew about.

The lesson of the sermon-skippers made a profound impression on me, though it would be a long time before I would consciously understand exactly what it taught me. Like all mid-century Americans those men took for granted the division between the two great realms of emotion and reason, or as it played out in their lives, between family and work. The church was concerned with the family, was indeed the bulwark of it; work belonged to the men, however, and the church had even less to say to them about the world of their workaday lives — their *real* lives — than their wives did. Because they accepted the church's authority over everything having to do with family — that is, over personal relationships, over courtship and marriage, over sex, over the rearing of children — and because their investment in family, however much they loved their wives and children, was subordinate to their investment in work, it was natural for them to feel that the priest's message had its proper relevance to the women. No offense intended, Father. It was true. And even Father whose sermons were being walked out on knew it, but Father didn't mind because, implicitly, he accepted the dichotomy and his place among the ladies as much as their husbands did.

Much is made of the enormous changes the Catholic church has undergone in the last thirty years, but one thing hasn't changed — the attitude of the men in the back.

One hardly ever sees us literally in the corner anymore, but the certainty that clergy have little to say to us *as men* is as implicitly and firmly held by my generation of American Catholic males as it was by our fathers. And at this moment when, as it were, the priest is in the act of turning toward us with his sermon — i.e., the bishops are about to read to us their long-promised (or is it threatened?) pastoral letter on the American economy — one senses the sermon-skippers scooting out again. Already "Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy" has been dismissed by many Catholic men, and some have even been moved to publicly rebut it.

The rebuttal may be new, but the dismissal isn't. "*Mater si,*" William Buckley's *National Review* cracked about Pope John's seminal criticism of capitalism, "*Magister no!*" Pope Paul's *Populorum Progressio*, a blast at the most basic assumptions of profit and ownership, was largely ignored in America, even by the Catholic bishops who felt compelled to promulgate with such dutifulness his encyclical condemning birth control, *Humanae Vitae*.

Ah, but birth control, there's a fit subject — unlike economics — for clerical discourse. My generation of American Catholic men arrived at positions on contraception in consultation with women, not with bishops, but aside from that noble collection of dissenting priests centered in

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Washington and various critics writing in this journal and others, ordinary Catholics had no real way of publicly rebutting Paul VI on *Humanae Vitae*. There was nothing to do but slip quietly away. Even now, as some Catholic politicians tentatively suggest that the bishops' position on abortion is insufficiently nuanced, no Catholics challenge their clergy's right and duty to make absolute pronouncements on the matter. Birth control and abortion fall into the realm that men have already skipped out on in this country. They are resigned to considering these two questions, as some women want them to, as the ultimate women's issues. So let women and the preachers have it out; we men are gone.

When the bishops issued their strong condemnation of nuclear weapons in 1983 they deferred implicitly to the testimony of men whose expertise they had dared to challenge. They allowed that peace may well depend not only on the deterrence of present levels of arms, but on major escalations. The bishops thus acknowledged that serious people can differ on this great issue and the way to resolve it, but in doing so they blunted their own courageous effort to actually affect the arms race. In the old pattern that is being played out again on the pastoral letter on economics, they were cheered by those who agreed with them and dismissed by those who didn't. They found it impossible to address this crisis of the nuclear threat with anything like the authority they habitually exercise on equally complex, though infinitely less threatening, matters of personal and sexual morality.

THE TRAGEDY of the American Catholic church today is not that its teachers have so little moral authority with the American public, but that they have so little with their own people. And what people Catholics have become! Because of the achievements of our parents and grandparents and in no small measure because of the triumph of our church itself, we are in the very center of American society now. We are the entrepreneurs, the tycoons, the Senators, the scholars, the editors, the reformers and for that matter the National Security Advisers, the Secretaries of Defense, State, and Treasury, and the SALT negotiators, too. But because we have in some way come of age as Americans does not mean we have left behind our Catholic faith. In many ways, precisely because we see up close the numbing and dangerous effects of secularism, we cherish our roots in the humane tradition of religion all the more. No one is more sensitive to the moral bankruptcy of the American marketplace than some of its Catholic managers. No one is more perplexed by a deterrence policy that depends on the will to murder the human race than some Catholic generals. No one is more determined to stay in touch with the Catholic liturgical and theological traditions than some parents who constantly search out ways to introduce them to their children. No one needs clarification of the moral issues surrounding abortion more than some Catholic men and women who know both that abortion is wrong and that, in part because of church teaching on birth control, it is inevitable.

In other words many of us Catholics long to hear nothing more than the clear authentic and effective voice on these and other issues of church authority. But even we, serious as we are about our faith and disposed as we are to make our most important choices in its light, have exceedingly low expectations. We have been lectured and condescended to far too often. We have come to know that bishops not only do not look to us for answers, but hardly hear our questions. Our reservations may have become by now true biases. But still we give the bishops our attention, for we remain loyal Catholics despite ourselves if not them. And always, we sense the contradiction that permanently underlies the position of the church and that inevitably undercuts its authority with us, not to mention with secular society. Even the most attractive figures of the Catholic leadership are still sponsors of the great divide that Americans are desperately trying to leave behind. At its most superficial level this is the divide between women and men, but it cuts across everything of importance, making opposites of peacemaking and "national defense," child-rearing and business, human experience and the imperatives of science, art, and rampant technology.

Clearly the American bishops want to be heard as having authority on the economy, as they want to be heard as having authority on family, and on war and peace. Despite the fact that their numbers now include some of the boldest and most gifted priests in the world, the American bishops still are not heard as having any such authority. If their views never carry beyond those who already agree with them (doves on the anti-war issue, right-wingers on abortion, liberals on their criticism of capitalism), then it is not authority. Authority is the moral capacity to compel the minds and change the hearts of those who disagree. Why can't these earnest, good men who have such convincing concern for the world and such resources at their command do that?

I said before that at its most superficial level the division which undercuts their authority is the one between men and women, but it is so also at its most profound level. That division wreaks havoc everywhere, destroying marriages left and right, preventing rich businessmen from even seeing the poor who are mostly mothers and their children now. That division guarantees that the peace movement which is mostly in the hands of women will remain ineffectual, and it makes possible the mad policies of our government which are created by rigid, unfeeling men and which so threaten the earth.

This deadly pattern — home against the world — is at the heart, I believe, of what undercuts the authority of church figures. The church herself, as my memory of standing in the back with the men indicates, has long been marked by the division between women and men, and some would say the church has been a major cause of it. The church is unapologetically patriarchal, even if its sub-institutions from parish schools to parish councils have long been dominated by women. *These* women, of course, know their places which are the kitchen, the kindergarten, and in church, up front listening to the sermon. Catholic clergy have long accepted the tenuous hold their authority has over men, but what they can't stomach are uppity women. There was a clue of this in the peculiar anger some leading bishops displayed toward Geraldine Fer-

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Sixtieth Anniversary Committee

OUR BIRTHDAY has arrived. To help us celebrate — and to seek the support that will assure us of many birthdays to come — *Commonweal* is happy to announce the formation of a Sixtieth Anniversary Committee, comprised of some of our most distinguished readers and supporters. We look forward to the Committee's efforts on behalf of *Commonweal*'s past and future.

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raro. What was this? A Catholic woman daring to hold the same position on abortion that the most prominent male Catholic politicians in America had held unchallenged by the hierarchy for over a decade? The church is suspicious of the new roles women are claiming for themselves and, in fact, in its alliance with the religious right's campaign for "family values," its tacit opposition to the Equal Rights Amendment, and its rigid adherence to traditional teaching on sexuality, the church upholds an image of womanhood that would make those new roles impossible. In addition, clergy continue to define women's areas of service and expertise mostly in terms of family and the rearing of children. Even if more and more men have made family life their primary focus or emphasize the home as much as the marketplace, attempting to carve new roles for themselves, too, they are not likely to get much help from the bishops and priests who have yet to admit that much has changed in the way men and women are trying to build their lives today.

THE PROOF that this is so lies in the way that church authority has dealt with the one direct challenge with which it has been confronted by women. I refer of course to the movement for women's ordination to the priesthood. What *are* these ladies thinking of? What *can* they have in mind?

Well, perhaps they think the time has come to stop this business of dividing things in two: home-world, peace-war, woman-man. Why should women make the altar breads but never consecrate them? Why should they aspire to every responsibility in the world, but to none in the sanctuary? Isn't it possible that in ordaining women bishops would begin to alter the gender-defined rigidity of role and images in the church? And isn't that what must change finally? It may seem a huge leap from my question about the bishops' overall lack of credibility to this one controversial issues. I don't mean to argue that women's ordination is the only problem or the only solution. But I do think the church's rejection of women at this point reveals something fundamental about the dichotomizing mind of Catholicism; men here, women there; men initiate, women submit; men do, women feel; men preach the Word, women hear it. But the Word, as Paul says, cuts both ways. At bottom this is a question not only of justice, but of community. If the church is to survive as a community in a meaningful sense, then this dichotomy must be ended. This structure must be changed. We have seen the beginning of such a change in the body politic this year, and who can argue that all of us Americans — men and women both — are not better off for it?

Not that women are superior, more sensitive beings whose exercise of authority as clergy would be wiser or braver, any more than their service as politicians is. My point is not that simplistic, but it is very simple; the *division* in the church which has rendered our clergy so nearly irrelevant to men, if not to women, to business, if not to family, to warmakers, if not to peaceniks, would be mitigated by the obliteration of its most telling manifestation. The bishops who accomplished such an act of rudimentary justice would surely be heard as having crucial things to say to all of us on the entire range of human issues, from sex to economics. They would preside again over a community of union, not division, having learned, with many outside the church, that resolving the ancient conflict between the sexes is a crucial step toward healing the dichotomies that keep the world in turmoil.

No matter how battered it is, our old instinctive, Catholic respect for bishops and priests abides. We value enormously their service as protectors of sacramental ritual, and they will always have us, and with luck our children, at their Masses. What we want, though, not only we men but we women as well, is reason to stay for the sermon. We will have it when they stop playing us off each other, perpetuating the division between us, and affirming the ancient dichotomy that rends the world, in the sad, bitter effort to keep their power.

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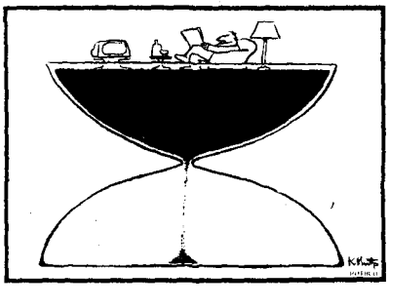

Challenging a commodity culture

JOHN KAVANAUGH

"Indeed there is already a real perceptible danger that while our dominion over the world of things is making enormous advances, we could lose the essential threads of our dominion and in various ways let our humanity be subjected to the world and we ourselves become subject to manipulation in many ways – even if the manipulation is often not perceptible directly – through the whole of the organization of community life, through the production system and through pressure from the means of social communication. The human person cannot be relinquished. We cannot relinquish the place in the visible world that belongs to us. We cannot become slaves of things, slaves of economic systems, slaves of production, slaves of our own products. A civilization purely materialistic in outline condemns the human person to such slavery."

Redemptor Hominis
(unofficial rendering).

IN THE CENTRAL sections of John Paul II's great christological encyclical, *Redeemer of Humankind,* he launches into an unexpected and complicated reflection upon the spirituality of economic systems. But what, one might ask, does the following of Christ have to do with being "slaves to production"? And why does the relationship between faith and economics haunt the doctrine of the pope whether he is in Brazil condemning slavery "to consumerism," in England recommending the vow of poverty as an act of resistance to the "tyranny of consumerism," or in Canada delivering a ringing indictment of the economic life and priorities of the industrialized nations of the North?

The answer lies in his dialectical view of human experience. Such a view provides a key to unlocking the complexities we face in trying to imagine an alternative way of life to the consumerist world of cultural capitalism.

Life, faith, Jesus Christ, all collide in the complex maze which makes up our cultural reality and which makes the question of "alternative living" frustratingly problematic.

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John Paul is quite aware of this complexity. That is why all of his sermons, letters, and speeches are so densely dialectical. All of the "compartments" of our lives are connected. Everything is related to everything else. There is a politics, even an economics, of sex. There is a spirituality of economic and social systems. There is a sociology of grace. There is sin in political reality. All touches all.

A living faith must be seen in such a context. If it is real and effective it will be dialectical, not something fragmented or compartmentalized. To accept Christ as way, truth, and life, consequently, is to allow him to enter every dimension, inhabit every space, penetrate every experience.

Our faith lives in and through space and time. It emerges in history only as inculturated, as embodied in concrete political, economic, social, and symbolic forms. And yet, if faith is collapsed into these cultural expressions, if it serves as little more than the legitimation of the nation or culture in which it lives, it is lost.

It is for this reason that John Paul II, whenever he advances a Christology which reveals the human person as pre-eminently valuable, created in the image of God, and transformed in Christ, insists that this liberating and saving truth may be suppressed by the force of advanced industrial society's cultural myths. Instead of freedom in Christ, we can be trapped into a subtle domination by the world of things. This domination is systemic and dialectical. It is brought about, even when we do not perceive it happening, by a formation system which is made up of the social-political system ("the whole organization of community life"), the economic order ("the production system"), and the educative blandishments of the media ("the means of social communication").

To speak of an "alternative way of life" in such a cultural formation system, consequently, is to address a whole network of inter-acting alternatives which live and thrive precisely in relationship to each other and their common connection in Christ. But, too often people of faith unwittingly choose only one area of alternative "resistance" and neglect the others. Some choose interiority, convinced that if they are able to maintain a citadel of solitude, they will be able to withstand the siege of depersonalizing forces. Yet, without community or familial support, without some expression in style of life or some commitment to social reordering, solitude alone does not provide an integrated, sustainable alternative praxis.

Others have sought community, hoping that they might be

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able to find some solace in the covenants of family, communion, or friendship. However, if this is the only dimension that changes in their lives, they soon discover the same cultural webs of isolation, violence, manipulation, and pretense duplicated in their patterns of relating to each other. Without the insights of social analysis, without the honesty of being known and accepted as a sinner before God, without the gentle suasion of the marginal and disenfranchised, without the expansive passion for justice, communities so easily turn in upon themselves in a Hobbesian nightmare of all against all.

Still others think that simplicity, "cutting back" and plodding toward frugality might offer some route of resistance. But the strategy fails utterly if it is unaccompanied by insight into the ways that consumerism infects far more than how we eat or what we wear or how we save and earn. The use of media as narcotic, the fear of relationship, the avoidance of commitment, the numbing of social consciousness, and the privatization of morality are all more profound cultural expressions of the tyranny of consumerism.

Social activism? Is there any more evidence or argument needed to suggest that such a maneuver, if it is uncomplemented by the truth of prayer, the praxis of community, the detachment of simplicity, and the immediacy of compassion leads to burn-out, involuted resentment, and a brooding sense of hopelessness?

Just as Christ penetrates every experience of a committed life, so also any response to Christ as a living alternative to the dominant cultural gospel must touch every dimension. Any "alternative way of life," if it is to be a true alternative, must be dialectical. It must be systemic. It must be wholehearted.

And so, with this somewhat ruminative theoretical background, let us now examine five areas of our lives where the economic gospel of our culture tries to establish its hegemony in wholistic, integrated, and dialectical fashion. In each of these areas — each always in mutual relation to the others — our lives of faith will have to be engaged, and a living alternative to the cultural tyranny of consumerism will thereby be embodied.

The loss of interiority and the unmarketability of solitude

"We Are All the Things You Are"
— Ad campaign for Saks Fifth Avenue

AN ADVERTISEMENT from the 1970's which was touting the formative power of *Playboy* purred, *"Good news for American Business: Today's young men are no longer committed to poverty. . . ."* What else is "good news for American Business?" What kinds of behavior will a culture based upon the demand for continually expanding consumption try to induce in its people?

"I Found Myself in a McCall's Catalogue." Thus, buying is transformed into our most interior experience. Our identities, pretentiously stolen from us, are now available for purchase. Our very being is collapsed into possessions and appearances. We *are* how we look, what we eat, and the way we buy. This is an economic phenomenon. It is also, critically, a spiritual phenomenon. It is not merely that we live by pretense and external appearance, not merely that we fill most of our waking moments with the media and the products that the media hustle, but that we are taught to fear the reality of who we are in solitary truth. *"Nikon: What would life be without it?"* Do advertisers really hope to imbue us with the subtle suspicion that we might go out of existence if we are not producing or somehow attached to the most real world of objects? The very condition of life is purchase, they say. We eat Life in cereal boxes. We smoke Merit and True.

In the context of a culture whose "formation system" is premised upon the interior drive of persons to produce, possess, and consume more, solitary prayer becomes an act of economic resistance, a radical alternative to the commercial imperatives of culture.

Whether one is a professional white-collar worker, a skilled or "unskilled" laborer, a family person, a single person, or a member of a religious community, the solitude of prayer is an intrinsic part of any dialectical response to consumerist culture. It may be perceived as a waste of time in terms of human productivity (it is not), it may be accosted as an insult to the logic of "self-made-men-and-women," (it is), and it may be a terror to any of us who want to avoid the fact of our utter creatureliness. But the commitment to prayer will inevitably bring us into contact with the deepest meaning of our personhood. Who am I when I cannot point to what I wear or achieve or collect? What am I when I cannot possess or control?

The fruit of solitary prayer is the simple but stunning fact that the great gift we have to offer the world, our God, and each other is the poverty of the human heart, possessing nothing other than its power to say, "I believe, I hope, I love." We

If you want peace, work for justice.
Pope Paul VI

That's what the United Passaic Organization did in New Jersey. Aided by the **Campaign for Human Development,** this parish-based coalition went to work on rehabilitating low-income housing. More than $500,000 in Community Development Block Grant money was secured for Passaic's poor neighborhoods. Rebuilt homes have recreated a sense of community, and increased cooperation with police has cut the crime rate. Real estate and insurance regulations have been changed, too.

CHD is sponsored by the American Catholic bishops. CHD helps poor Americans help themselves through projects that *work*. America needs workers for justice. Your donations are the tools that can transform lives. Won't you lend a hand?

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may be told that we can believe in Remington, trust Woolite, or that Musk is love; but with the encounter of God in silence, the phenomenon of personal reality is revealed. And it is a truth that, while it may be "bad news" for American business, unleashes the human being into an engagement of personhood in each of the other arenas of life.

The loss of solidarity and the resistance of covenantal life

"As we've heard a boring number of times, a child is only lent. If you clutch a loved one too closely, that person might disappear. . . . But there's no need to hold back when you're dealing with possessions. Clasp a sensuously soft cashmere as tightly as you like (assuming your fingernails are well cared for). It will never walk out on you."

SO A run-of-the-mill *Cosmopolitan* article, "Passion for Possessions," ominously reveals our dread of relationship and flight to commercialism. As a people, in so many ways we are taught to seek out what an American Motors advertisement called "*a problem-free relationship*." Yet, as C.S. Lewis reminded us in *The Four Loves,* if we want never to experience the problematic pain of love, we should give our hearts to no person. We should love only things, and our hearts will not be broken. They will become unbreakable, impenetrable, like the dead objects of our love.

The economic myths and demands of our culture have massive influence on our relationships, our covenants. They attempt to channel our loves, our passions, and our desires into things; and if at the same time we experience a painful absence of human convenantal intimacies in our lives, we may buy ourselves to death.

Friendship, family intimacy, and community are economic realities. But they are counter-values for capitalism. "The best things in life really are free."

Our communities, so often fragmented by liturgies of media worship, and our families, so often regimented by dictates of productivity and achievement, carry within their very identities the seeds of resistance to consumerism. In relationship, as in prayer, our truth can be known. Such activities are neither easy nor without risk. The pre-eminently human enterprises of faith, hope, and love never are. Moreover, all covenants take time. It takes time to allow myself to be known and thereby loved as I really am. That is why a committed relationship in the midst of a society that lives by efficient speed and quick pretense, where "looking good is everything," is an act of economic disengagement and courageous resistance.

If we spend one half hour a day more in relationship — talking with a community friend, walking for a while with our spouse, "wasting time" with our children, speaking the truth to a brother or sister, we will find ourselves empowered to resist much of the institutionalized craving of our acculturated appetites. Such craving is, after all, little more than an attempt to fill up the stark emptiness of a life bereft of covenant or intimacy.

Systematically legitimated injustice and social commitment

"Beat thy Neighbor."
—Motorcycle ad

WE BREATHE injustice. It's everywhere. It's hopeless. What can one man, one woman do? And so, in so many rhetorical ways we ape the commodity culture that has formed us in the image and likeness of things. Things are expendable. People come and go, die, starve, burn, are aborted, are executed. And we, we the living, the conscious? Who are we — so passive, so helpless, so determined and thing-like, so susceptible to the laws of supply and demand? The received wisdom of our culture tells us that nothing can be done. And not much worry ought to be expended. To hope for otherwise is to be a pollyanna, to be hopelessly naïve, to be headed for a "guilt trip." Things feel no guilt.

"*Face the facts, the real world.*" The reality principle here is one of human expendability — in the midst of massive waste and with the help of stunning negligence. Meanwhile we sell parakeet diapers, Calvin Klein diapers, and designer clothes for our cabbage patch adoptees. Justice is passé. "*Sip it with arrogance,*" an ad for drink says. And, with the height of consumerist arrogance: "*For the price of a small house you could own this chair.*"

The capitalist reality principle is so powerful that when the pope speaks to us of Christ's justice whereby the third world nations of the South will "rise up to judge the rich nations of the North," we say, surely he cannot mean us. Surely his talk of economic imperialism, of mountains of munitions cannot refer to us; we, so helpless and passive, cannot respond.

Thus, systematic injustice is two-edged. We can become as helpless as the things we adore. Depersonalization is intrinsically related to injustice. Underlying all violence is a human being that has been reduced to the status of an object. To kill a person is literally to "thingify" a person. Violence and injustice — in all of the subtle institutional, political, and interpersonal forms — are the cultural mirrors of the "thingified" self. Not being able to tap into the splendor of human personhood encountered in either solitude or solidarity, there is no subjective or intersubjective referrent for the affirmation of the inherent worth of persons. There is no reason not to be unjust.

Consequently, when we imagine an alternative way of life in the context of our culture, we must include the heroics of social commitment — against all the wisdom that it is unrealistic, against all the cultural prudence that advises we will get nowhere, against all the socio-psychological warnings that we not appear foolish.

As men and women of faith, a faith grounded in Jesus Christ, we can see that justice is not some liberal program of social planning and one-worldism. Quite the contrary, it is the very exigency of the Gospel. For the Christian, justice is the very embodiment of faith and love: faith in the revelation of Jesus and love for the human person who is revealed by Jesus as the very face of God. The issues of hunger, imprisonment, homelessness, and economic injustice are not those of some

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social commissar. They are the very flesh of faith, the criteria of the Last Judgment which Jesus himself sets up as standards for following him and for encountering him on this earth.

After Jesus, everything is different. "As often as you have done this to the least" — any and all, not merely the innocent, are included in this notion — "you have done it to me." "This is my body," Jesus says in the sacrament of communion whereby all human flesh, even in its least forms — unborn, imprisoned, dirty, homeless, communist or capitalist, oppressed or oppressor, the damaged, the ugly, the unproductive — is rendered holy.

This spiritual, theological, and political insight is in absolute contradiction to the criteria of worth established by our cultural conscience where human value is a function of beauty, utility, innocence, whiteness, blackness, wealth, or masculinity.

Christ shatters all of this. Not only are we all judged capable of responding freely to the call of justice, but we are all deemed worthy of just action.

We must note, however, that the commitment to justice is not simply an insight, but an embodied reality. Each must act. Anywhere and on any level. Each must commit — not for the sake of some myopic one-sided issue, but for the sake of our Christ in faith. We will not be able to do it all, but we will be able to do something. This is to change the given order. This is to embody our commitment to an alternative way of life. Conviction must be given concrete specificity in our culture. We picket. We inform. We gather information. We protest. We undergo the threat of arrest. We look foolish. For the old, for the poor, for the unborn, for the disenfranchised, for peace, for the future now threatened by our nuclear nuptials, for the millions in misery neglected by the bullheaded excesses of capitalism.

This area of praxis will be prodded and sustained by prayer. It will be confirmed and supported by our community and covenantal exchange. It will be concretely expressed in the "style of our lives."

Craving consumption and simplicity of life

"Living Well is the Best Revenge."

—Liquor ad

BUYING, CONSUMING, and possessing can become acts of violence. Such behaviors are related not only to justice in the world, but also to fairness in our covenantal lives, and self-love or self-hatred in our interior lives.

Simplicity of life is not a matter of bean sprouts and old jeans. It is not grounded in some special virtue of want or frugality. No, if simplicity has any intelligibility, it is found in the value of persons over things, the primacy of labor over capital, the worth of humanity over property. This is definitively revealed in our faith, in the saving action and teachings of Jesus. "Traveling light" is a response, not out of guilt or trendy narcissistic asceticism, but out of love for persons and personal life.

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Things are for persons. This truth is behind every style-of-life-question we might ask. Can things bring us closer together or force us apart? Do things provide an escape from myself and from God in solitude, or do they enhance the possibilities of encountering the Holy in all persons? Our questions are not so much ones of "cutting back" as they are of integration and personalization.

When we live more simply, we have more time for solitude, more time to savor and appreciate the things that we actually have. We are less cluttered by assaults from the media. We have more time for each other, more time to "waste" in relationships, more time to appropriate our lives together in family or in community. When we live more simply, we are more able to respond to the problems of injustice in the world — not only by sharing of what we do not need, but also by time for greater availability in service and social action.

Thus, cutting back television-viewing — a style of life matter — will influence my time available for prayer or reflection. It will affect my morning and evening hours. It will have an impact on my own self-understanding. It will also modify

ECONOMICS OF SHELTER

HABITAT BUILDS ON FAITH

MILLARD FULLER is a tall, skinny, middle-aged man whose eyes squint whenever he smiles, which is often, and whose smile is so wide and full of teeth that, on any other face, it would qualify him for a beauty contest. His bones knock against your back or ribs as he pats you and hugs you in greeting not once but several times with an energy that seems reserved for you alone. "First," he says in a Georgia accent so thick the word gets two syllables, "let me look at you. You look just great, just great." Millard's Southern gentility is authentic; his joy effervescent; his enthusiasm constant; his energy relentless and near fatiguing. Yet his manner exudes a confidence — not so much in you as in God's ability to do something in you beyond imagining — that much of the time is empowering. He sees reality not just as what is, but as what could be: that old shack could be a pretty new home; that pauper with only one leg could be a self-sustaining head of a household; that dwindling congregation could sponsor a new house in India. An opportunity to listen to Millard's life work and life story (*Bokotola* and *Love in the Mortar Joints*, Association Press, 1977, 1980) will leave your mouth agape, but to live and work alongside him as he builds houses for people in need around the globe may change your life.

Knowing this, I was not at all surprised to read in the *New York Times* this September that former President Jimmy Carter was visiting New York City to begin rehabilitating a six-story tenement on the Lower East Side as part of Habitat for Humanity, a nonprofit, international Christian organization that builds low-cost housing for the poor. Habitat was founded by Millard Fuller. Who else could enlist the voluntary carpentry skills of a former president? Carter, a man faced with thousands of projects soliciting his benevolence, chose Habitat. I can't help thinking that the whirlwind enthusiasm of Millard, whose international headquarters is a mere nine miles from the Carters' house in Plains, was simply too near for Carter not to have been swept up by it.

As it turned out, Carter's support became a PR bonanza for the fledgling New York City project where press coverage was both crucial and difficult to obtain without something grand. The president's presence garnered national coverage for Habitat in the *New York Times*, the *Boston Globe*, *USA Today*, *Newsweek*, *Time*, and *People* magazine.

I met Millard and his family in 1976 while I was living at Koinonia farm, an ecumenical Christian service community near Americus, Georgia. Millard, Linda, and their four children had just returned to the U.S. after serving as missionaries for the UCC (Disciples of Christ) in Zaire. They had lived at Koinonia for four years before leaving for Zaire, so through reputation I felt that I had always known them even before they returned to settle back into the community, telling us stories and showing us slides of their work. I knew that Millard had been among those who conceived of the Fund for Humanity, a concept of financing that provided resources for Koinonia's partnership housing, industries, and farming. The idea was simple: the profits from farming or the pecan industry would go into the Fund for Humanity. So would any donations or non-interest loans from people who wanted to support the projects. Finally, as houses were built and sold to families who needed them but could not buy a house by other means, their monthly payments would be put back into the Fund to replenish the money supply. I was gratified to hear of Millard's application of this concept to housing projects in Zaire. As a member of Koinonia Partners, I saw the Fund's concept at work daily. What struck me, however, was Millard's own history, how he and Linda arrived at Koinonia the very first time.

It is a classic story, one that never wears with telling: a millionaire gives his money away for the service of God. It is St. Francis stripping off his Calvin Kleins to begin anew.

As a college student Millard and a friend, Morris, became partners, a pair of boys working to become rich. They sold birthday cakes, desk blotters, cookbooks, and later real estate, each a lucrative effort. After law school the two men became law partners, but their business dealings outshone their law practice. Each married; each achieved the American dream. For Millard and Linda this meant: an eight-room house in Alabama, three cattle

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my openness to relatedness. No longer will it dominate the meals I take in community, set the pattern of conversation with my family, fill up my life with the average thirty-hours-a-week of watching commercials, soap operas, sports, or shows with canned laughter.

In a similar manner, greater simplification in my patterns of consuming, entertaining, or dressing will profoundly affect my sense of driveness to possess more and newer things. It will invite me into discussion with friends or families over our so-called needs, desires, and wants as consumers. It may well enlarge my leftover income that might be put to the service of others.

Once we see the integrated way that our style-of-life decisions are related to other areas of our lives, it becomes easier to live more simply.

The flight from vulnerability and the counter-economics of compassion

"If Your Hair Isn't Beautiful, the Rest Hardly Matters."
—Shampoo ad

farms, a Lincoln Continental, a cabin on a lake with two speedboats, and twenty acres of land with plans for a bigger home with swimming pool and stables. Millard achieved a net worth of $1 million at the age of 29.

HE ALSO suffered an estrangement from his own church and found himself compromising his principles. His health began to fail and so did his marriage. Linda had difficulty living with a man who was married to his business. She left Millard in 1965 to "think it over" — this was the turning point. So many marriages would have ended here. The story is refreshing as Millard tells it because his love for Linda is convincing; so is his love for God in light of the subsequent transformation of their family's life once they decided to give away their money and embark upon a new vocation. First, they met with Clarence Jordan, who had founded Koinonia in 1942. Millard took a job as fundraiser for Tougaloo College, a black school in Mississippi. The family moved to Koinonia just before Clarence's death. Then they went to Zaire. What next? I met Millard and Linda as they posed this question.

Millard wanted to use the Fund for Humanity concept to build houses throughout the U.S. and around the world. So Habitat for Humanity was born, headquartered in a rebuilt shack in Americus, Georgia. Eight years later, housing projects exist, in various stages of completion, in eleven foreign countries (Guatemala, Nicaragua, Bolivia, Peru, New Guinea, India, Haiti, and four countries in Africa) and in fifty-one locations in the U.S.

Habitat utilizes networking techniques and hundreds of volunteers. For instance, a church hears about Habitat and wants to get involved. Land is sought and money is raised to purchase it. (In Mbandaka, Zaire, the government donated the first land used.) Then volunteers are sought as well as tools and materials, including heavy equipment. All donations go into the Fund. Then as homes are begun and the project is publicized, people are selected to reside in the homes. Selection is made by committee; the criteria include: need, ability to make a down payment and monthly payments, and participation in the construction. Participation is often a certain number of labor-hours. Guidelines may be tailored in particular situations. For example, in Ntondo, widows who were unable to make the down payment were not rejected.

As expected, housing costs vary from place to place. In Nicaragua a house costs around $1,000 whereas in New York City, the apartments will cost around $30,000 each. However, the basic principles, what Millard calls "the economics of Jesus," remain constant: no profit, no interest; payments replenish the Fund for Humanity. The concept of providing housing as a form of Christian ministry is stressed. For this reason, home buyers are encouraged to give money in addition to their payments, whenever possible, to help provide housing for others. A group of three thousand Zairois raised $400 toward a new house in Guatemala.

For me, it was touching to see the huge integrated crowd assemble in St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church, Manhattan, on a Friday night to sit through a two-hour presentation by Habitat leaders. The "economics of Jesus" were explained in reference to the Lower East Side project just a few blocks from another kind of economics epitomized by Wall Street. Here was an evangelical-style service delivered to New York sophisticates by an integrated ecumenical team (complete with black Gospel choir) — all within a Romanesque enclosure. I was impressed by the five-minute litany of contributors: carpenters gave labor; lumberyards gave nails and tools; a restaurant returned the dinner payment for over forty volunteers; a donor paid for the busload of volunteers from Georgia (including the former president).

Finally, there was the irony of Jimmy Carter, accused by some of taking government's responsibility for the poor to an extreme during his administration, now spearheading what mistakenly looks like a Reagan dream: a volunteer project that asks for no government monies. Yet the difference is that the presence of Carter exemplified Christian service as a complement to, *not in lieu of* governmental duties.

Now, after my chance reunion with Millard, after attending the Habitat rally, after writing this article, I am walking the length of Manhattan to raise funds in a Habitat walkathon. I guess my New York apartment was too open to Millard's whirlwind Spirit for me not to be swept up by it.

KAREN SUE SMITH

(Karen Sue Smith is an assistant editor at Commonweal.)

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The final dimension of our "lived alternative" to the gospel of capitalism is that of opening ourselves to the vulnerable, those so unable to cover up their wounds that they serve us as living refutations of such dogmas as "self-made-persons" and "fulfillment in things." The marginal are unable to cram themselves into the consumerist parameters of "meaningful existence" or the categories of commercial thought. All the products of the market will not ease their existence or make the pain go away. The only reality that can encounter them, be touched by them, or help them, is personal reality.

The Teresas of Calcutta, the Jean Vaniers, the Dorothy Days, the Dom Helder Camaras — all speak to us of the empowerment we receive "from the poor." Why do they insist that "we receive so much from them"? What is it that we receive that cannot be bought? It is ourselves. It is the irreplaceability and value of our own human personhood.

If we structure into our lives an ongoing contact with the marginal people of our society, we will sustain and be sustained by them. It is so easy, even with prayer, to be deluded into a false consciousness about our true identity and purpose. It is so possible, even with community life, to hide from the marginal persons both outside and within our families and communities. It is so seductive, even while living simply, to ignore the plight of those for whom simplicity is no option — for whom it is at best a dream of wild imagination. It is so easy, even if working for justice, to forget the immediacy of compassion, of personal presence.

In each area of our lives there is a humanity that is poor and disenfranchised, that hungers and hides, that grows old and feeble and dies. This is what must be encountered — our own frightening fragility as persons. But this is also what we may most tragically evade. For in finding the precious personhood of the dispossessed, we will discover our very own personhood which we need never fear losing.

The young priest was terrified. He was in a strange country. He was with strange people. And they acted strangley. Handicapped. In this L'Arche community hidden in India. And yet the young priest had wanted to help. But at night he would shiver. Not from cold, but from shame. The thought of his fear. He was surely as frightened as the "Mongoloid" man who had arrived on the same day, who was in his thirties, too, who was separated for the first time from his hovel and his mother, who could only sit crouched on the floor and blow away the dust. The priest's fears were different. Of dirt. Of the loss of control. Of the terrible failure. Of some strange mentally-mutilated person drifting into his room at night.

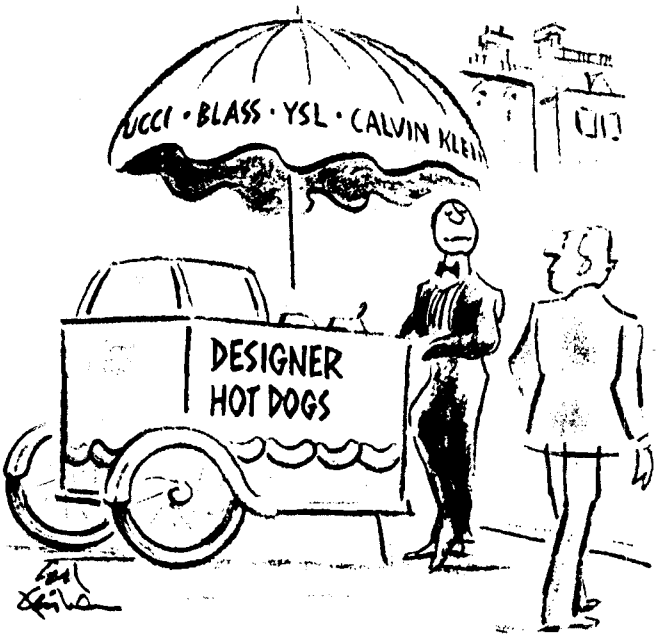
It was on the third weekend, more dreaded than longed for, after dragging himself back to the community of handicapped that the priest, still fearful, was halted by a grab at his leg. The man with Downs syndrome, staring at the floor that he was cleaning with his breath-broom, stuck out his shaky hand, not looking, but refusing passage until that hand would be held and shaken.

At the gesture of friendship and sympathy, the fears of the priest finally melted away. Pretenses dissolved, the rigid controls eased.

We are all handicapped, he said to himself. It's just that some of us can pretend better than others.

—An anonymous story

Those who cannot pretend, who cannot "make it" with success and achievement, minister in marvelous ways to those who are tempted to pretend that they are something better than they are. Those who cannot pretend to be anything other than human engage the humanity of those for whom they reach. They reveal the truth that the most splendid gift we bestow upon each other is not some object, but our personhood. This is the outcome of prayer and of relationship. This is the meaning of justice and simplicity. Herein we discover that it is the human heart and hand which, no matter what the conditions of our woundedness, is most subversive and healing in a world of commodity consciousness.



The school of compassion is our final element in the "living alternative" to cultural capitalism. It is the world of irreplaceability. It is a world where we encounter the utter uniqueness of each person and the utter universality of our shared human nature. It is a world where, even if the only gesture we are able to offer is blowing the dust from the ground and offering an innocent hand of welcome, we do something mighty and majestic.

A full dialectic of personal living is the only alternative to the dialectics of domination and the idols of capitalism. Our "manner of living" will be authentically alternative when it is whole, abiding with our aloneness and with our solidarity, informing our just action and our simplicity, engaging us in our learning from the marginal and unprotected.

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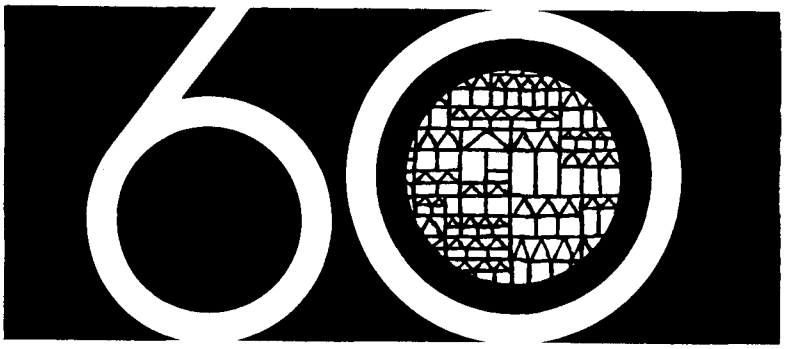
Comments from sixty years



Faith & economics

'NORMALCY' & ITS DISCONTENTS

TO SOME PEOPLE man is a machine, and man is no more than a branch of physics. To other people man is an animal — merely — and economics, like psychology, is no more than a branch of biology. To Catholics man is a rational animal endowed with free will, and an immortal soul; and, therefore, to Catholics, economics is a branch of ethics.

It is the inexpressible value — and, therefore, dignity — of human personality which makes economics a Catholic matter, and . . . this is the main cause of quarrel between the Catholic church and the competitive system of production and distribution. All Catholics, as Catholics, are, or should be agreed that there must be such a limitation upon the operations of competition as will prevent the imposition upon any social class of living conditions incompatible, at a minimum, with the dignity of human personality. The principle of a minimum wage is surely based on the moral law. **—Thomas F. Woodlock, "A Catholic Economic Program" December 2, 1925**

OUR POLITICAL system contrasts with our industrial system. The one is democratic while the other is not — it may be described as distributed autocracy, with a rapid tendency to become concentrated autocracy. . . .

—Henry Somerville, "A Guild Plan for Industry" February 10, 1926

DURING THE LAST two or three years, the balance sheets of industry and finance have, indeed, looked very favorable. Every economic advantage attainable by a nation . . . has been lavished upon us. Yet there is no doubting widespread unemployment, which to a large extent is the result of conflict between the owner and the worker, and the effect of competition between manual labor and machine labor.

It should not be forgotten that "peak" periods like the present constitute real tests of the ability of the capitalistic system to promote the general welfare better than any other system of distribution could. If now, when all the means are at our disposal, we cannot do something in the way of social improvement, there is little reason to believe we ever can, under the same management.

—The Editors, "The Business Boom" January 4, 1928

THAT AMERICAN industry is not on the high road to democratization through the diffusion of stock ownership is shown by an analysis of the latest report of the Federal Trade Commission on National Wealth and Income. . . . Nineteen of every 1,000 shares of preferred stock are owned by workers in the concerns listed . . . [But] even these holdings are largely in the hands of those in the higher paid positions, and the rank and file of employees have small representation. So passes another myth which has furnished material to many imaginative writers. . . .

—The Editors, "Week By Week" September 28, 1927

BISHOP-BASHING

THE COMMERCIAL status of the "Bibb Manufacturing Company, of Macon, Georgia," is unknown to us, still more so the social significance in his community of Mr. W.D. Anderson, its president. But when the latter cracks the whip over "forty-one southern bishops and ministers" who have lately issued a report describing the conditions in mill villages as "deplorable" and urging their abolition, we hope the thoughtful world is listening in. Mr. Anderson's conception of the functions of ministers of religion is a rigidly spiritual one. "We need the help of our bishops and church leaders," he is reported as telling his brother members of the Georgia Association of Cotton Manufacturers recently, "but not at the point where they are seeking to inject themselves." . . . On the face of it, and without having read the report, a course in economics and mill management does not strike us as necessary before forty-one presumably educated men can speak with conviction on what they have seen, heard, and smelled around them. But such matters of detail take a back

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seat before the inner implications of this Georgia cotton baron's ukase. Men whose interpretation of things necessary for salvation the godly South is quite prepared to write into its legislation are represented as careless, insincere, and subject to "sinister influences" the moment their counsels leave the sphere of divinity and enter that of dividends.

—The Editors, "Week By Week"
May 4, 1927

CERTAINTIES BEFORE THE CRASH

WALL STREET may not seem exactly like an arena of philosophy . . . yet, as an ironical editorial writer in the *New York World* pointed out the other day, when the market was behaving like a seesaw in the playful hands of drunken sailors, two such great experts in finance as Professor Irving Fisher and Mr. Roger Babson could, and did, issue directly contradictory accounts of the situation. What was black to one was white to the other; what one predicted with cold, scientific certainty, the other flatly denied with equal assurance; and within twenty-four hours both were proven right, and also wrong. . . . We have no sort of opinion as to whether the Yale professor of economics or the Boston master of financial statistics knew more of the facts, or which of them judged the facts more scientifically, but we would venture the opinion that fundamentally both gentlemen really functioned more as philosophers than as adding machines.

—The Editors, "Trumpet of the Dawn"
September 25, 1929

SUPPLYING WORKERS' NEEDS

INDIRECTLY AND by implication, the Senate Committee on Recent Economic Changes suggests a more acceptable remedy for the kind of unemployment which is now puzzling students of the problem. It endorses the "principle of high wages and low costs as a policy of enlightened industrial practice in a period of stationary cost of living — the recognition of wage-earners as the great domestic market."

. . . This policy would provide the most humane and the most easily available remedy for the persistent overproduction and underconsumption that afflicts our industrial system. Instead of seeking to arouse new wants in the jaded appetites of the rich and well-to-do, why not supply the proper and reasonable wants of the toiling masses?

—John A. Ryan, "The Experts Look at Unemployment"
October 16, 1929

BELLOC ON MONEY

THE MOMENT a man sets down the title "Money" over a bit of writing, or brings out the word "money" in conversation, the first idea everyone must have is that he is going to do one of two things. Either to advise them how to become rich quickly, or to advise them to have nothing to do with the beastly thing at all. . . . Heaven knows I have not the capacity for the first, and I hope I have not the hypocrisy or impudence for the second. If I knew how to become rich quickly, I doubt if I should share the knowledge; while as for leaving money alone, why, to pay no attention to money means, nowadays, to neglect keeping alive. . . .

The first thing that occurs to me is this: let us avoid like an intellectual and moral plague . . . the quite modern and quite despicable illusion that the possession of wealth is something to be worshipped and the lack of it something to be despised. . . .

The last thing to be said about money is, I think, the most important, and surely it is very simple. It is this, one should never sell oneself.

—Hilaire Belloc, "Money"
May 7, 1930

REMEDY FOR CURE-ALLS

SIMPLICISM IS a habit of mind prompting thinkers to ignore difficult technical aspects of a problem in favor of a solution drawn with neat logic from high and remote abstractions. It is the tendency to find single cure-alls and panaceas for complex diseases requiring each its particular treatment. It is the urge to reduce all the tangled threads of causation to a single irrelevant generality. It is the defense-reaction which escapes analytic thinking by claiming the solution is ready to hand. It is always grandiose; usually eloquent; inevitably facile and futile. The simplicist attitude is doing the church no good.

A particularly conspicuous manifestation of the simplicist mentality is found in the triumphant I-told-you-so tone with which "Apostleship-of-the-obvious" writers point out the relevance to current economic problems of various passages in the two famous encyclicals. Of course Leo and Pius made observations relevant to present-day issues. . . . But do or do not those papal documents lay down a tangible program of resettlement that is, in some not-too-remote way, applicable to economic maladjustments in America today? . . . What correlation can be established between Catholic theory and measurable facts in the economic order? . . . What have our ethical abstractions to offer that will remedy the evil of recurrent underproduction in an economic régime confessedly dominated by the profits motive? Or to affect the functioning of those forces that, in periods of prosperity, cumulatively augments capital funds until the two irreconcilable correlatives of over-expanded industry and undistributed buying power snap sharply apart to let in the floods of misery? . . . What does our remote academic ethical science teach us, relevant to the "trend of bigness" which so obviously binds into one the separate fates of many economic units and spreads economic misfortune over wider areas, and which works so insistently today even though statistical evidence shows a very much higher rate of return on more moderately capitalized industrial units? Above all, what light does our inherited corpus of doctrine cast on the difficult question of how much governmental intervention in business is to be advocated without compromising the property rights of individuals?

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I do not say that these questions are beyond the pale of Christian ethics. Emphatically they are not. But I do say that when simple-minded people talk about the pertinence of inherited Catholic thought to contemporary economic problems, without once showing how that thought is pertinent to those problems, without even manifesting any real understanding of those problems, and without having made any patient study of economic facts, they are simply wasting their readers' time and engendering in high-minded non-Catholics (I speak from personal knowledge) a healthy and justified contempt for the whole Catholic program of social readjustment. . . .

What is to be done to remedy all this? In the first place, let us try to establish a line of demarcation between those things, in the economic order and in the actions of those who control that order, which are matters of moral obligation and those things which are merely matters of wise economic policy. For instance, is the establishment of some determined maximum-hour working-week obligatory on employers so long as an appreciably large number of employables are idle and indigent? Is it obligatory on the grounds of social justice toward these idle workers who are deprived by unemployment of their theoretically inalienable human rights? Or on what grounds is the minimum wage, which I suppose we all advocate, to be interpreted as that minimum which is sufficient to enable a worker and his family to live on, or just above the naked level of subsistence? Or that which, by broadening the base of consumers' demand, will expand industry to the point where every employable worker may find the opportunity to earn for himself and his loved ones the means to decent human living? Is the employment of child labor in industry fundamentally immoral, or is it just something which nice people wouldn't do but have a right to do if they believe in God, freedom, and the Fourteenth Amendment? Is the right of labor to organize and demand tolerable wage-conditions an essential right, to be defended at all cost? Or may incommoded consumers protest publicly, with holy conscience, against the rapacity of strikers in, let us say, the building service trades? Is it morally wrong, or just thoughtless, for a business executive during a period of deficit-operation to reduce wages and curtail employment without cutting into his own $100,000 salary?

These are elementary instances, all connected with the right of labor, on which Leo XIII has given explicit doctrine. A more imposing list of more pointed and difficult questions could be drawn up on such matters as financial control and corporate management—fields where papal guidance is at least obscure. . . .

IN THE SECOND PLACE, we should agree on at least the broad outlines of an economic policy. . . . The broad lines of progressive policy ought to suggest themselves as the consequence of our conception of human rights. We need not expect, nor should we desire, complete unanimity on details of economic policy. But if Catholic thought were clarified and crystallized even on so fundamental a question as the degree of government interference in business that is desirable, America's foremost Catholic economist(s) would not be denounced in Catholic periodicals as a Socialist because he espouses the spirit of much of the New Deal legislation.

. . . Let us have more facts, fewer facile generalizations.

—John A. Loftus, "Protest Against Simplicism"
September 18, 1936

HOUSES OF HOSPITALITY

IN THE Middle Ages, when one out of every four was leprous, there were two thousand leper houses run by religious in France alone. . . . It may be horrifying to make such a comparison, but inasmuch as one out of every five workers today is unemployed or on work relief, the catastrophe which has visited us is comparable.

Unemployment is the gravest problem in the country today. . . . There are thousands of men sheltered in the lodging houses of New York City, run by the city, and countless other thousands sitting up all night in missions and flop houses and roaming the streets. As the weather gets warmer you may see them sleeping in the shelter of buildings, in areaways, in subways, along the waterfront. They crawl into their holes by night, and by day come out to tramp from one end of the island to the other in search of food. Every other city . . . has the same problems.

Seventh Annual Merton Lecture:

"BEING A PROPHETIC CHURCH"
by Rosemary Haughton

Author of "The Passionate God" and thirty other titles, Rosemary Haughton co-founded a community in west Scotland called Lothlorien. This led to involvement with the growing movement of "basic Christian communities" in North America, a new growth of the Church that resembles the form of the earliest Christian Churches. She is now a member of Wellspring House in Gloucester, Mass., a sanctuary for those in need, and a place of training for those called to serve the poor in North America.

November 15, 1984, Thursday Evening, 8:00 P.M.
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. . . Groups in New York, Boston, Pittsburgh, Chicago, Detroit, Milwaukee, Troy, St. Louis, Houma, Louisiana, and Windsor, Ontario, have started what Peter [Maurin] himself called from the beginning houses of hospitality, where those in need can receive food, clothes, and shelter, and hold round table discussions. . . . Peter has always pointed out that according to canon law, all bishops should be running hospices, or houses of hospitality. But now . . . those in need are turned over to agencies, to the city or the state. . . .

I have visited all the hospices run by Catholic Worker groups, naturally, and they all have the same difficulties and the same problems and are all run on the same lines. They all started with no funds at all. A small group got together, decided they wanted a headquarters for propaganda and meetings, and rented a store for $10 or $15 a month. None of them ever knew where the next month's rent was coming from. Usually there was no money for paint or soap or mops or beds or stoves or cups. But little by little these things were contributed. Most of them began fearfully and are continuing fearfully. If any of them ever thought they were going to have to feed the numbers they are feeding, they would never have had the courage to start. (Oh, we of little faith!) . . . For as soon as the feeding began — as soon as the mood of hospitality began to make itself felt — lines formed at the door, and continued day after day.

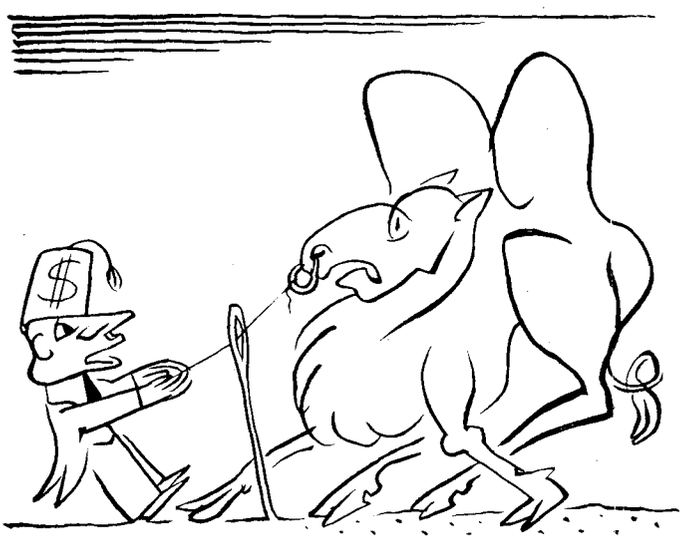
In New York, our breakfast line, which began with a single friendly pot of coffee on the stove . . . grew and grew until now we serve breakfast to approximately 1,000 men. . . . In Boston they feed 250 men a day; in Pittsburgh 200; in Detroit 400; in St. Louis 200; and so on. The numbers are not so large, but if the reader will just contemplate saying to himself, "Two or three friends and I will undertake to feed 350 people a meal every day," not just for one day but indefinitely . . . he would be aghast. Just try it. He would not think it possible by himself of course, nor would he trust the Lord to fall in with his seemingly presumptuous plans.

Yet if we are thinking in terms of personal responsibility, to those who sit around and say, "Why don't the priests do this or that?" or "Why don't *they* [that indefinite *they*] do this or that?" we should reply, "Why don't *we all*?"

—Dorothy Day, "Houses of Hospitality"
April 15, 1938

Christianity & capitalism: a debate

ALONG WITH the indiscriminating denunciation of individualism, there has evidently developed lately, even among Christians, a no less unguarded condemnation of capitalism. . . . Capitalism, in this obvious sense of the accumulation of wealth, is essential for human progress and naturally in full accord with Christian ethics. . . . The accumulation of capital cannot be avoided if there is to be progress. . . . Individualism, capitalism, even laissez-faire, in the sense of freedom of initiative, are part of the Christian inheritance as opposed to the slavery of the ancient world. It is Christianity which set every individual man free to strive and to find his place in the social order according to his ability.



Working His Salvation **—Jean Charlot, August 5, 1938**

The encyclicals? The more one rereads with reverence those two great charters of Catholic and intelligent social action, the *Rerum Novarum* and the *Quadragesimo Anno*, the more one is struck by their perpetual mediating between the extremes into which we are constantly and alternately in danger of falling: the indifference of the State to social injustice, and that illegitimate interference of the State.

Let us then accept, as the encyclicals do, the challenge of the day: the necessarily larger capitalizations and organizations of our day. The problem is to Christianize them, to make them amenable to moral law. . . .

—Louis J. A. Mercier, "Capitalism and the Facts"
January 8, 1937

VICIOUS DEGRADATION

THE ARTICLE on "Capitalism and the Facts" by Louis J. A. Mercier in the *Commonweal* of January 8, is a most important one, and raises some rather fundamental points for discussion. . . .

I do not know where M. gets the "primary" meaning of capitalism as "the state of having capital or property." . . . It is wrong to identify capitalism with the institution of private property, since that institution flourished long before the advent of modern capitalism. It is equally wrong to identify capitalism with high-powered technological mass-production, as M. does at times, for then Russian Communism would be capitalistic.

Capitalism is precisely an economic system in which capital (or goods used in the production of further goods) plays the

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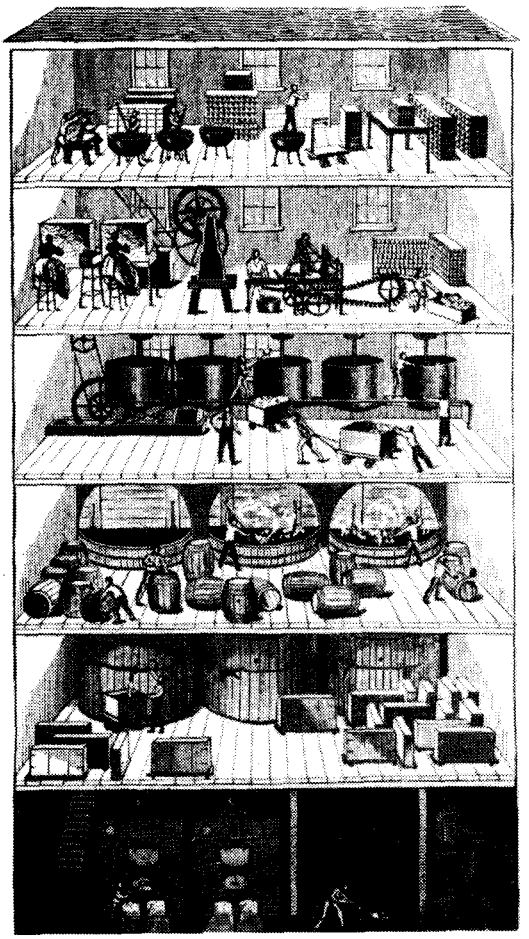
Doing economics justice



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predominant part. Hence the system is vicious, both ethicall and ontologically. If we divide the productive factors into brain, brawn and capital, as economists do, and ask ourselves which factors ontologically play the important role causally in producing the combined effect, the economically valuable product, our answer will be that all the factors are necessary, but that the ontological scale of value assigns primacy to the efficient cause (all active human contributors). In doing this capitalism degrades men to mere economic factors of cost, to be bargained for at the lowest possible market prices. . . . They are individual items of cost and not persons with souls, aspirations, self-determination, etc. And their rights are reduced to the right of accepting work at the proffered price or else starving. **—Virgil Michel, "Facts about Capitalism" March 12, 1937**

CHRISTIANIZING CAPITALISM

JUST AS THE notion of individual rights must be compromised if the term individualism is loosely denounced, so the notion of private property and capital is undermined if capitalism and capitalists are indiscriminately condemned. Capitalism and private property stand or fall together because the word capitalism cannot be dissociated from the possession of capital, and capital is merely a surplus of private property. We become capitalists as soon as we produce more than we consume. Hence capital is essentially the reward of virtues — superior capacities, industry, foresight, abstinence — even though it can be acquired by taking it wrongfully from those who exercised them. . . .

But even on Father Michel's own description, capitalism does not stand condemned. He tells us that "capitalism stands generally for an economic system in which capital plays the preponderant part." Well, what is wrong with capital playing the preponderant part? . . . In our industrial system, the worker is indeed the smallest factor of the efficient cause. The plant and machinery are far more important, and still more the brains that have organized the plant and developed this machinery. Moreover, is it true that capitalism necessarily "degrades men to mere economic factors of cost to be bargained for at lowest possible market prices . . . as individual-items of cost and not persons with souls, aspirations, self-determination, etc.," and that "their rights are reduced to the right of accepting work at the proffered price or else starving"? Capitalism at least saves from starving those it employs. . . . What we need, then, are not onslaughts on capitalism which, by befuddling the issues, may so easily lead to lawlessness, but objective studies of the actual benefits and possible abuses. . . . What part of the big fortunes of the country is represented by plants, equipment, replacement funds, and thus instead of being a private preserve, really promotes the welfare of the community? What part of profits can be taxed without endangering the social efficiency of such concerns? What part of the large personal fortunes of say the last seventy-five years have gone into endowments for the benefit of the public? . . .

The problem of the distribution of the wealth made possible by recent scientific progress is then most complex and difficult to solve. What is certain is that it cannot be solved by indiscriminate denunciation. . . . The way to safeguard our liberties is through what may be called Christian individualism, and the way to social justice is through what can only be, in some form or other, a Christianized capitalism.

—Louis J. A. Mercier, "What Price Definitions" June 18, 1937

THE CULPRIT CONDEMNED

CAPITALISM IS SO DOOMED to extinction that it can continue to exist only in so far as it ceases to be capitalism. Recently businessmen of a large city issued a statement in which they advised the changing of the wage-system to one of partnership and profit-sharing. They did not seem to be aware of the fact that such a fundamental change as giving up the primacy of capital over labor would put an end to traditional capitalism.

Why is modern capitalism doomed? . . .

(1) Because economically capitalism calls for an unbalanced and unbalancing distribution of the gross returns of its enterprises. Capitalist activity can in reality flourish and increase only through an increase of purchasing power among the rank and file of the people, whereas the dynamism of capitalism depends on and demands the ever greater accumulation of capital in the hands of the few, and new labor-saving devices have helped much to decrease still further the general purchasing power of the people.

(2) Capitalism is linked up with a financial structure oranized to supply means of investment and only those, whereas the great need in an age of potential plenty is a system that can supply greater purchasing power.

(3) Capitalism has reduced hundreds and thousands to a state of chronic malnutrition and even of starvation.

(4) Capitalism has starved the souls of millions, even of many whom it made materially rich. Today the laboring classes have come to a common consciousness of spiritual starvation as human beings. . .

(5) Capitalism has ceased to be the promoter even of the best possible material and social progress. Because of the high-powered investment in gigantic centralized machinery, it cannot afford to keep pace with new inventions for human good in so far as these mean the scrapping or replacing of machinery long before the expected profit has been made from it. . . .

(6) Capitalism has prostituted culture to the seeking after material gain. It has commercialized our legitimate stage, still more the cinema and popular literature . . . Even our newspapers with few exceptions are no longer purveyors of the truth, but capitalistic enterprises for greater profit, public lie and scandal sheets . . .

Just because capitalism is doomed, it is imperative for Christians to look not backward but forward. It will not do for them to be merely "anti" this or that, least of all to be merely anti-communistic. They must also be "pro" something. . . .

But pro what? Who can look into the future and determine

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the right technical structure of a Christian order? Certainly, the Pope refused to do that in the *Quadragesimo Anno*. He pointed out fundamental principles of Christian social reconstruction and left the rest to time and to us.

In the meantime there are various movements for social reconstruction under way even now, that have two points in common: (1) they are opposed alike to capitalism, communism and fascism; (2) their principles and aims are in harmony with the Christian ideal of life. I am referring to the cooperative movement, of which much has already been written in these pages, and of the corporative order of Christian sociologists, of the personalist movement of the Amis d'Esprit in Europe and of the distributist-agrarian movement of England and America. A Christian can support any of these movements without having to believe that it is the all-embracing program for a new social order. But he cannot refuse to support at least one of them without being guilty of neglecting his social duty and of allowing iniquitous capitalism to lead to its logical conclusion in either communistic collectivism or the equally totalitarian fascism.

—Virgil Michel, "What Is Capitalism?"
April 29, 1938

Action on behalf of the workers

NEARLY A YEAR ago in press dispatches, mostly from Pittsburgh, a word combination, that startled many a reader, began to circulate. A group with the weird title Catholic Radical Alliance had been formed in that grimy town and was saying and doing things which attracted public notice.

Why this combination, Catholic and Radical? . . . In the minds of many, Catholic and non-Catholic, lurks the thought that the Catholic Church is primarily a conservative, nay reactionary, force, while, as a matter of fact, she is dynamic, crusading and radical. Hence the use of "Catholic Radical" Alliance, both to shock and to inform. . . . Who knows, outside of some relatively learned men . . . that the Church is the friend of the worker and the poor . . . ?

. . . That's why the Catholic Radical Alliance was formed. . . . We feed, shelter and clothe the poor, counsel and aid the workers, picketing with them, feeding them, addressing them, defending them from attack. We do this, primarily, because it is right and good and, secondarily, that all men may know the Catholic stand. . . .

Last spring, Pittsburgh was stirred by an A.F.L. strike at a monster food products factory. . . . The strike was proceeding according to schedule. The company bought page ads in every daily, accused the union heads of being Communists, claimed that a few agitators were responsible for the trouble, that its employees were eminently satisfied but that outsiders were stirring some of them up. . . .

We lined up the facts in the case, got in touch with the strike committee, heard their side of the story and the next day two priests and four of the laity were down on the picket line. Signs were carried proclaiming the justice of the strikers' cause and our support for them. When the strike ended in an agreement for an election, priests from the C.R.A. addressed a pre-election mass meeting. During negotiations, later on, one of us sat in on some of the conferences. Subsequently at an N.L.R.B. trial he testified in the union's behalf.

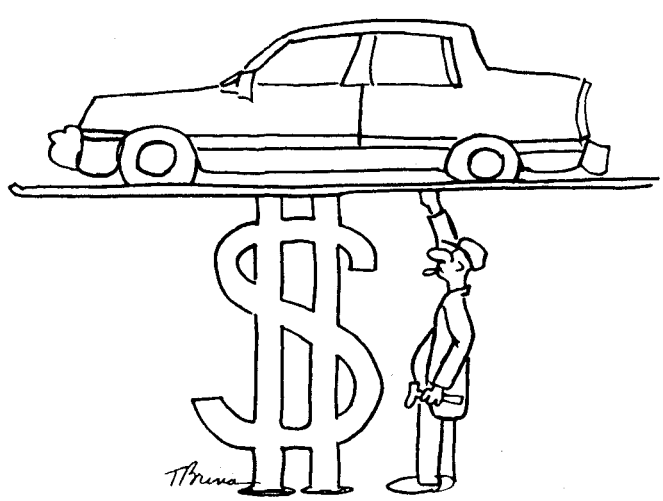
What did all this mean? It meant that a Catholic group had taken action on behalf of the workers, had helped them materially, had won their gratitude and had effectively spiked Communist reports that the Church was for the rich and against the poor. . . . Of course, every strike situation is different, every union is different and changes in technique are required...

We do all this because, primarily, it is the Christian thing to do. American workmen, in the mass, are in the toils of an unjust wage slavery. They lack freedom and security. Under the present system a good labor union is the only thing that can give them even a modicum of freedom and security. . . .

The labor angle is just one facet of our program. In addition, there is our House of Hospitality, where 350 are fed daily, our Farming Commune, our education and propaganda activities. . . .

Someone may wonder how one gets a thing like the C.R.A. started. It's simple. You get a group of kindred spirits together. Discuss social issues for a time. Wait until a strike bobs up in your vicinity. Investigate the issues, giving the worker the benefit of the doubt. Make a statement in the workers' favor, if they be in the right, as they generally are. Go down to the picket line and carry signs favoring them. Try to get your pictures taken down there, being sure to have a few pretty girls in the foreground so that the picture will stand a good chance of being printed. Brazenly make statements on everything germane to our field. The true Catholic doctrine is such dynamite that statements of this kind are always newsworthy. Thicken your hide against assaults from the Right to Left. Let them beef their heads off, you will be doing right and God will bless you.

—Charles Owen Rice, "Policy and Action"
July 29, 1938



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A postwar proposal for the economy

IN THE MIDST of war we can already clearly see the central problems of peace for the people of the United States. It is a problem at base economic, but it covers areas moral, social, political; and the effects of its solution or non-solution will be principally felt in these areas. . . .

Briefly stated, here is the central problem of our future: How can we see to it that our economy will provide jobs for all who need jobs, so that an available abundance will replace the scarcity under which a large portion of our people historically have suffered? To do this means to keep the national income at a high and steady level . . . and to ensure that it shall be distributed broadly enough to provide demand for what the nation produces.

If we can solve this problem, we shall not have solved all problems; but if we cannot solve it, most of the more specific social problems will remain unsolved. A decent housing program is impossible unless people have money to pay for it. Nothing in peacetime more greatly contributes to juvenile delinquency than lack of opportunity to work. . . . An adequate and proper diet for the American people is directly dependent on adequate jobs. Relations between whites and Negroes will deteriorate even further if a scarcity of jobs perpetuates economic discrimination.

And our much-vaunted way of life, our political institutions, our freedoms will melt away under the searing effects of the protracted depression which will be the inevitable result of large-scale unemployment. If we cannot learn to manage our economy for the benefit of the people as a whole within the democratic process, some other process will take its place, and that other process will inevitably be statist or totalitarian. For the war has shown men and women that it is possible for America to operate at full speed, for everyone to have a job, for the national income to reach new record highs. To do so required governmental interference with the normal course of private enterprise. If, when this interference lessens, private enterprise goes back to its old ways, the popular mind is likely to jump to the extreme conclusion; it will go beyond desiring reasonable government regulation and decide that only by means of an all-powerful state can our great natural wealth and energy be harnessed to the welfare of the entire community. This proposition we deny; but its attractive power will be overwhelming if our economy fails to do its job, especially in view of the presence in the population of twelve million discharged service men, habituated to discipline and security.

The authors, firmly committed to both a Judaeo-Christian and a democratic philosophy, therefore feel that it is the duty of all of us to take stock, to see what means are at our disposal to preserve our freedoms both as democrats and as Christians. Let no one suppose that an all-powerful state will long remain tolerant of a genuinely Christian church. It will either seek to corrupt it, or to destroy it, seeing in it the only social force which by its very nature must remain morally autonomous, and therefore a potential moral rival.

BEFORE LISTING some of the means whereby we may work to achieve an economy of abundance, certain terms and concepts need to be clearly defined. The economic dogmas of liberalism—repeatedly condemned by the Church, as well as by many Protestant and Jewish thinkers—have so deeply permeated all our lives that we accept them unthinkingly, as though they were moral or natural laws. Thus the notion that property rights are absolute is probably accepted by the vast majority of Americans, no matter what their religious connection. Yet this is a profoundly unchristian notion. In the early Church, the property of all believers was held in common, for the advantage of all, just as it still is in the religious orders and in a very few of the more simple and primitive regions of Europe.

This practice, however, is unworkable when it is not voluntary and when the size of the social unit prevents the close intimacy essential to its success. We reach a second stage in the definition of property. Ownership is a trust, a loan from God, Who is the Father of all, to be used for one's own *and* the common benefit. Only the ownership of such property as immediately supplies its owners' needs, without involving the needs of others, even approaches an absolute right. One is not permitted to destroy what might be serviceable to others even if one owns it. Thus the family farm becomes the classic form of true private property, the right to which must be defended at all costs. In a similar category are an artisan's tools, a fisherman's boat, a widow's competence. . . . .

This, in summary statement, is the Christian concept of private property. It is very far removed from the "free enterprise" concept of absolute ownership, under which an owner is free to do almost anything his whim may dictate. He can keep thousands of acres lying fallow while his neighbors are landless and hungry. He can close his factory and discharge all those dependent on it for a livelihood simply because that factory is not as profitable as he might wish. And when "free enterprise" ownership assumes a corporate form, in which the owners are totally divorced from physical contact with what they own, the situation is likely to become even less tolerable. Especially is this the case when this form of ownership concentrates vast power in the hands of managers who are not themselves owners; under contemporary conditions this power may exceed that of the state and constitute a threat to the welfare of the community. In September of this year Pius XII again condemned the absolute conception of property rights: "Where . . . capitalism is based on such false concepts as to arrogate to itself an unlimited right over property without any subordination to the common good, the Church has condemned it as contrary to the natural law."

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Hence there is no theoretic or historical reason why Catholics may not advocate *socialization* where it is necessary. They may not be doctrinaire socialists, seeing the remedy for the abuses of capitalism in a total denial of all property rights, but they may be *socializers*—on the one condition that there be no other remedy at hand, for socialization does tend to expand the power of the state, and that power must be limited if we are to avoid tyranny.

For the modern world, then, there are available several altogether licit and practical forms of ownership, better calculated to serve the common welfare than the liberal-capitalist ownership of the past.

Private ownership of an almost absolute character is essential in the realm of personal property—the family's house, clothing, food; a family farm; a carpenter's tools. It applies likewise to investments made from savings, to family-operated businesses. Only as the number of non-family employees increases does the right of ownership become more subject to regulation in the general interest.

Cooperative ownership is a useful and tried device whereby consumers or producers can band together in order more effectively to safeguard their interests.

Corporate ownership is normally the only kind possible for large-scale enterprise. As the sole natural check on its irresponsibility is the necessity of making profits, society must devise other checks to prevent abuse of its power. A great step forward would consist of giving labor a genuine participation in management. The relatively new device of the public corporation (such as the various "port authorities"), financed and in the last analysis owned privately, but the management of which is disassociated from this ultimate ownership—appointed by the state under certain limitations to prevent such appointments being purely political—holds much promise for the future.

Direct state ownership is so subject to abuse that it should exist only where there is no alternative. It is above all dangerous to labor, since under it there is a tendency to deny the right to strike—ultimately labor's only weapon, and the hallmark of a free economy. . . .

As has been said, the basic need is the achievement of an economy in which no considerable section of our people is required to live at a level below what our society generally views as a decently comfortable minimum. Otherwise the concepts of the dignity of the human person and of democracy in general are meaningless.

Since this condition is basic, the common good—the public interest—requires that any activity which potentially may prevent the achievement of this condition shall be subject to restraint by the municipal, state or federal governments. . . . Hence monopoly cannot be tolerated except where necessity requires it, and in such cases it had best be operated either directly by the government or by means of a public corporation in order to safeguard the public interest. . . . A tax policy which acts as an incentive to investment, and particularly to equity investment (common stocks as distinguished from bonds, debentures, preferred stocks with fixed dividend rates) in new enterprise is highly desirable.

The traditional capitalist and American attitude toward labor as a mere com-

Robert Coles on NICARAGUA

Arturo Cruz, who resigned as Nicaragua's Ambassador to the U.S., wrote in *Foreign Affairs* that the Sandinista Revolution's "rank and file" is made up of "idealistic boys and girls."

Recently I went with two of my sons to Nicaragua. Idealism seemed very much in evidence. The literacy program has been dramatically effective; among those who helped in that effort were upper and middle class youth in Managua who attended a Roman Catholic school. The school's principal, Edwin Maradiaga, a native-born priest, was eloquent in his description of what has taken place: "For our students this was the opportunity of their lives. They had lived in a protected world of their own. Under Somoza, half the country had an income of less than $100 a year. The Somoza family alone owned a quarter of all our arable land. They and a handful of cronies had total power and huge wealth, while 80 percent of the people had no water, and two thirds of them no electricity, and half no sanitary facilities at all, and nearly three quarters lived in houses with dirt floors. Over 100 of every 1,000 children born died as infants.

"Our students have learned these statistics. Once they didn't know them, because – to be frank – we didn't teach them. We didn't know them ourselves! Many of our students have never forgotten the experience of going into the barrios, and teaching children their own age how to read and write. One of our boys asked why he'd never been told about how his own people live. I think many of us have been shaking our heads about the past and trying to work for a better future. I wish someone would tell your people how many of our young people from very comfortable families have been given a real jolt of idealism by this Revolution."

But he is a reflective priest, by no means willing to allow the above observations to take complete control of his mind. He is in a terrible bind. He knows there are tough ideologues hard at work among the Sandinistas – anxious to give short shrift to the desire many have for a social democratic outcome. The Sandinistas have curbed dissent, and shown little sensitivity to the people's religious yearnings or the truly revolutionary possibilities a Christian spirit offers.

But: "For over four decades we lived with fear and bitterness every day here, and we knew that the outside world, by and large, didn't care much that we were a country enslaved," he pointed out to us, to my sons especially, who kept wondering how it was that a country they love – our country – could be so indifferent for so long to the ordeal of Nicaragua under Somoza – and now be so vigorously sensitive to the mistakes and wrongdoings of the Sandinistas.

Extracted from the April 1984 NEW OXFORD REVIEW

If this kind of portraiture strikes a responsive chord, consider the NEW OXFORD REVIEW, where Robert Coles writes a regular column titled "Harvard Diary" in which he speaks out on the issues of the day. Like him, our writers work out of a radically Christian sensibility – producing an unconventional magazine that transcends the debilitating dichotomy of "secular Left" *vs.* "pious Right." An ecumenical monthly edited by lay Catholics, the REVIEW has been characterized by *Newsweek* as "thoughtful and often cheeky." Why not give us a try!

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modity, to be bought in the open market—which induces powerful interests actually to favor unemployment, because unemployment depresses the labor market—must be modified. A systematic educational campaign, building up moral sanctions, and the enactment of minimum wage laws of universal application, coupled with the establishment of unemployment relief standards truly adequate to cushion dislocations, can help to change our traditional attitude. We must remember that existing minimum wage legislation does not cover whole classes of workers—agricultural labor, domestic help, etc.—and that present unemployment relief varies greatly from state to state and is in most states not only niggardly but disproportionately low in view of the funds actually available in state unemployment relief reserves.

The real income of the farming community—owners, tenants, sharecroppers and casual labor alike—must be kept reasonably constant and adequate. . . . A most helpful development would be the systematic encouragement of diversified farming and of production for home use on the farm, whatever soil and weather conditions permit. Such a campaign would involve governmental guidance in restoring fertility to worn out soils and would have to include actual government aid of the FSA variety in order to make smaller farming once again an available and rewarding way of life. . . . Essential to any over-all solution of the problem of our American society is the acceptance of planning on a national scale. The more such planning can be done by private groups—trade associations, farm organizations, labor unions, large industries, local authorities—the better, subject always to the planning process not degenerating into disguised monopoly. The proper functions of state and Federal government is to integrate and correlate what should principally be done by private initiative. But if private initiative refuses to plan for itself, or to plan with proper regard for the general welfare, a far more direct and active form of government planning is inevitable.

When we speak of planning, we mean merely an extension and integration of a procedure with which American business is already familiar. Thus, for example, the American Telephone and Telegraph Company has long had a department whose task it is to determine future needs for telephones, taking into account population trends, business developments, etc., so that its subsidiary manufacturing concern, Western Electric, would not over-expand its facilities and yet would not fail to produce equipment when it was needed. . . . Up to this point private enterprise can do substantially all the work and make all the decisions. But in order that potential demand may be equalled by effective demand, government at this point in the process must intervene and adjust minimum wage rates, unemployment compensation rates and taxes.

Side by side with planning of this type there is a secondary variety of planning designed to raise the over-all standard of living of specific geographical areas. This planning can be done by such private agencies as the great endowed foundations, by municipal government, state government, joint action by two or more states, and finally by the Federal government. The foundations can do a great deal to further the cooperative movement, to study the problems of housing and medical care, etc. Municipal government can implement housing programs. State government can often play a useful role in extending electrification. Joint action by two or more states can produce such useful enterprises as the Port of New York Authority. The Federal government can create TVAs — as it is proposed that it should now do in the Missouri Valley, the experiment in the Valley of the Tennessee having been so successful. The execution of such plans should not be viewed as mere public works, serving a pump-priming function in the face of depression. There should of course be a sheaf of such public works (court houses, post offices, super highways, libraries, etc.) developed and ready to be carried out, but the kind of enterprise we have in mind here should be a continuous feature of our economy, to be put under way as rapidly as resources and circumstances allow, since in the long run they will serve to increase effective national demand and supply sorely needed expansive factors. . . .

Many of the lines of approach we have suggested are the sort of thing to which thoughtless persons apply labels. There is only one important thing for all of us to do if we are to avoid the tragedy which would spring from another major depression. That is not to be misled by the application of epithets. Study proposals for what they are — not for what someone else calls them. For only by thinking clearly and freshly can we even approximate a decent world to live in.

—Martin C. Kyne and the Editors, "The Problem of our American Society," November 3, 1944

CULTURAL CONTRADICTIONS

"THEY WANT security. But some risk takers are needed" is the title of a recent *Life* editorial. The "they" are the 1949 graduating class who are said to lack significantly the spirit of adventure generally associated with a college diploma. . . .

At any rate, one opposition of capitalism, one of its paradoxes, is that while for its internal health as a system of ideas it depends upon a self-denial and a willingness to take a chance, still once it descends into the market place it seems to succeed in proportion as it induces the public to value luxury and security above everything. Hence on the one level (the Horatio Alger level) it makes much of striving, thrift, the acceptance of hazard and rugged competitive individualism. Yet on the other level (that of the market place) it tells us that the good life is really easy to obtain, tells us beguilingly that we ought to deny ourselves nothing, makes us want to do anything but live thriftily, makes us afraid to take a chance (we might fail and lose everything), and works against individualism: first by tending to monopoly if not checked constantly by forces outside itself, and second by telling us con-

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stantly how important it is to be like everyone else so far a the acquistion of material goods . . . is concerned.

—John P. Sisk, "Security First"
August 19, 1949

A LATIN PERSPECTIVE

FOR North Americans capitalism represents a practical formula which has proved successful: as a nation they have reached the highest level of wealth, and as individuals the highest standard of living. For South Americans the capitalistic system represents exactly the opposite. . . . For North Americans the terms capitalism and democracy are synonymous. . . . For South America capitalism up to now is a formula which has failed, since the great mass of her people is prey to the greatest poverty. For them capitalism is a doctrine and an economic fact that leads to the accumulation of wealth in the hands of a few, subjecting nations to international monopolies, and resulting in a low standard of living for both industrial workers and rural populations. . . . If no policy is found to remedy from its foundation the origin of this political process, democracy will disappear in South America. . . .

—Eduardo Frei, "Two Views of Capitalism"
May 26, 1950

LIVING UP TO THE ENCYCLICALS

THIS MONTH marks the anniversaries of Pius XI's *Quadragesimo Anno* and Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum*.

It might be useful to take some of the major points made by these two great popes and see how much they have guided not only the American labor movement but also American employers and American government.

1. *Support for union organization.* The labor movement has welcomed this one and the odds are that the popes' support helped labor to increase its membership from 3,000,000 in 1931 to more than 17,000,000 in 1956. But this is still only 39 percent of the 43,000,000 estimated "organizables." American government has followed the policy in such laws as the Wagner Act, but . . . American employers still follow the lead of the National Association of Manufacturers, which takes the position that there can be no peace with labor until the unions forfeit or are relieved of the right to insist that all workers in a given plant belong to a union.

2. *"The worker must be paid a wage sufficient to support himself and his family" (Quadragesimo Anno).* The U.S. Department of Labor . . . estimates the weekly wage necessary to support a modest family of four (two children) at approximately eighty-three dollars a week. The latest figures show that for the average *factory* worker wages are about seventy-eight dollars per week . . . and it is estimated that 20 percent of U.S. families live on less than forty dollars per week.

3. *Obligation of the state to pass laws which "undertake the protection of life, health, strength, family, homes, workshops, wages and labor hazards . . . with special concern for women and children" where these matters have not been properly provided for by private agencies or associations.* Labor has certainly supported this papal position. The employers, by and large, have fought it with epithets ranging from "Communism" to "creeping Socialism." Government has generally recognized the obligation since the Roosevelt administration. . . . The disputes on such social legislation now rage over how far and how much.

4. *Economic planning with a view to maintaining full employment, "namely that the opportunity to work be provided to those who are able and willing to work" through maintenance of "a right proportion among wages and salaries . . . and prices" (Quadragesimo Anno).* Pius XI saw this planning as being carried on not only by the state but primarily by labor and management themselves meeting in industry councils under government supervision.

Philip Murray, the late president of the CIO, and his aide John Brophy were both Catholics who were familiar with the encyclicals. They incorporated this idea into the Industry Council Plan, which formed the subject matter of a unanimous resolution at CIO conventions every year and then gathered dust until the next convention. A very few employers have looked kindly upon it, but in general management regarded it as galloping Socialism or worse, and government has tended to ignore it in the face of such strong opposition.

5. *Defense of private property, the wage contract, and a moderate degree of competition.* In Mr. Meany's words, this position has "fit in with the American scheme of things," though not perhaps "perfectly." American employers have sometimes fluctuated between devotion to the more cut-throat varieties of competition and an inclination, once on top, to destroy any and all competition, whether it be fair or unfair.

American government has also followed this policy, and American labor has been overwhelmingly loyal to it. . . .

6. *Profit-sharing, stock-sharing, and co-determination.* . . . American employers have taken a few steps toward profit-sharing and stock-sharing. But too many of the profit-sharing enthusiasts . . . look upon it as just a handy little device for keeping the union out. This attitude has soured many labor leadrs on profit-sharing. They also feel that there is in it a danger of blunting and confusing the dividing lines between labor and management. . . .

7. *"Side by side with these unions there should always be associations zealously engaged in imbuing and forming their members in the teaching of religion and morality." . . . "The first and immediate apostles to the workers ought to be workers; the apostles of those who follow industry and trade ought to be from among them themselves" (Quadragesimo Anno).* In this country there are about eight chapters of the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists plus a few other kindred organizations . . . There are also a number of labor schools conducted by these organizations . . . The Young Christian Workers, where established, have done good work among the younger element. . . . Unfortunately, in many dioceses there has been no action at all on this papal concern.

But still, add it all up, divide, subtract, condense, boil and

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remove the impurities, and what do you find. George Meany was not too far wrong. I think there is something about the American people that makes them, by inclination and experience, more receptive to the popes' middle way of rights and duties, of cooperation without collaboration, of impersonal justice and personal charity, than any other people on earth. I think we have come a long way since 1931, and a much longer way since 1891. But if we are moved by this thought to sit down and smugly contemplate our own superiority, God help us. For we surely have a long long way to go.

—John C. Cort, "Social Encyclicals: Progress Report"
May 25, 1956

THE SUBVERSIVE SITUATION

ONLY WHEN one lives in an underdeveloped country does the expression "sub-human conditions" become visible and tangible. To live in a sub-human condition means to live in a home which is not a house, to be constantly ill-fed, to be dressed in rags, not to have the slightest guarantee of work, not to enjoy a minimum of education or even of spiritual care. . . . Here in Recife, the capital of the Northeast, it is sufficient to see one *algado* (marshland slum) or the *mocambos* (dry slums) to realize intimately that there are human creatures living more like cactuses than like human beings . . .

In such an underdeveloped region . . . anybody who feeds the hungry, who clothes the naked, who improves the slums, who fights illiteracy, who opens orphanages and medical first-aid centers, is received well, especially by the rich. As soon as anybody attempts to *conscientizar* the masses, he is singled out as a pro-Communist. . . .

When the primer of the Movement for Basic Education (sponsored by the Bishops of Brazil in the poor areas of the country) was accused of being subversive, the Bishops countered with the statement that what is really subversive is the condition of the rural masses. . . . How to act in this delicate situation is an enigma. It must be deciphered, as soon as possible, by all those in Brazil — and throughout Latin America — who have any measure of responsibility and leadership.

—Helder Camara, "Conscience and Anti-Communism"
December 18, 1964

WHEN LOGIC BOTTOMS OUT

TWO ILL-MATCHED critics recently took exception to the current war against poverty, on more or less similar grounds. Writing for the N.Y. *Herald Tribune,* Clare Boothe Luce uses satire on President Johnson's crusade: "So long as the economic structure of society remains that of a pyramid, the bottom cannot be eliminated." Not one to overestimate her readers, Mrs. Luce at this point inserts a parenthetical explanation: "(This can be readily understood if the reader will construct a small paper pyramid and then cut off the bottom. He will see that the layer above the discarded portion will then become the bottom.)" Got that, stupid?

. . . A similar point minus the humor was made by editor-writer Irving Kristol in the *New Leader.* "In any society in which income and wealth are unequally distributed," Mr. Kristol wrote,'Those whoe receive the least are going to be 'the poor'. . . . Obviously, if one defines the poverty line as that which places one-fifth of the nation below it, then one-fifth of the nation will always be below the poverty line."

Well yes. But in fact is that what is being done? Is the notion of a war on poverty a kind of statistical con game? I think not. . . .

Here in New York, for example, better than three-quarters of a million individuals live in families in which the total income is less than $40 a week. Something like 150,000 have incomes of $100 or less a month. In all, about one million New Yorkers live in poverty in 1964. . . .

To get an accurate picture of poverty in the nation as a whole, a similar analysis would be necessary in each town and region. But even without such a detailed town-by-town analysis, it should be clear that poverty in America is real — at least as real as Clare Boothe Luce and Irving Kristol. . . .

—James O'Gara, "Poverty, Pyramids, and Eggs"
March 29, 1964

THE STATE OF WELFARE

IT HAD BEEN a year and a half now that I'd been representing the bureaucracy, promising people aid they never got, jobs where there weren't any, medical care from butchers, sending them to psychologists who tried to help them accept their poverty, poking my nose in, spying — that's what the job basically was — the spying. But hell, I thought, at least I'm trying to do something. Then Bertha Williams called me up.

Actually she had called me up about a month before and asked me to drop over. She wanted some advice. She was a lovely, gentle woman whose husband deserted her five years ago, leaving her with four kids to support. She had worked in a factory stuffing jock straps in boxes until she was knocked down by a lift truck and her spine injured. . . . I had been very lucky in helping Mrs. Williams out of a jam she should never have been in during my first winter as a caseworker.

It had been a very bad winter with many spells of zero weather. Mrs. Williams made the mistake of moving from a condemned building. Her case record was lost and her aid checks undelivered. When she first contacted me her new landlord had given her a five-day eviction notice. She'd been surviving for two months on what she had been able to borrow from relatives and friends most of whom were little better off than she was. Her apartment had no furniture — some boxes and a mattress on the floor, a hot plate, but no refrigerator. She had been keeping her perishable foods on the windowsill, pulling them in at intervals so they wouldn't freeze, until someone got wise and stole them. I managed to talk the landlord into turning her heat back on and lifting the eviction notice. When I went to the office from which her case had been supposedly transferred, I found her case record and checks among the myriad memos that had accumulated on the desk of

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her previous worker. He had quit over a month before and still hadn't been replaced. I had a violent argument with my supervisor who took the position that since Mrs. Williams had managed to exist for two months without aid then apparently she didn't need it. She was overruled, however, and the Agency approved $15.00 for a refrigerator. Her landlord, astounded at receiving his back rent, got us a good deal on a "hot" Frigidaire.

Mrs. Williams trusted me. She wanted some advice on her ten-year-old son, Irwin. He had a hernia, she explained, and she wondered whether she should have corrective surgery performed now or wait until he was older. I told her that was strictly a medical decision which I couldn't make, but that I did know that scar tissue heals faster at a young age. We talked about the possible effects growing up with a hernia might have on the boy like affecting his interest in sports or his entrance into puberty. I advised her to discuss it with a doctor. When I returned to the office I wrote out a referral to County Hospital for Irwin and mailed it to Mrs. Williams.

At first I didn't recognize her voice.

"Who am I speaking to, please?"

"This is Mrs. Williams." Her voice was flat and hollow at the same time.

"How are you, Mrs. Williams? How did Irwin make out? Did he have his operation?"

"Yes."

"How's he doing?"

"He's dead."

I had an impulse to hang up. The phones were ringing. "He's dead? How could he be dead from a hernia operation? It's not that serious." For some reason I didn't believe her.

"He's dead," she said, "that's all I know. He died on the operating table."

"But how! — didn't they tell you how?"

"I guess they did. They said they had to cut a hole in his throat but that it didn't work. I don't know; I didn't understand them."

"I'm sorry," I said.

"I'm calling to find out about the funeral," she said. "Are you all gonna pay for it?"

"Yes . . . tell the undertaker to call me and I'll make out the forms . . . I'm sorry, Mrs. Williams."

"Thanks," she said and hung up.

I listened to the phone buzz for a while and then dialed County Hospital. I asked for information about Irwin. They gave me the runaround until I started hollering about an investigation. I didn't tell them I was a case-worker. I said I was with the Mayor's Office. A doctor explained that the boy had a heart defect which had gone undetected and his heart failed during the operation. They did all they could — performed a tracheotomy and massaged his heart but he died. There was nothing anybody could do, he said. It was one of those things.

I hung up and my phone rang almost immediately.

"This is Mrs. Williams again. I hate to bother you but on our budget for next month . . . do you have to take Irwin off right away. I could use his twenty-five dollars to buy us some clothes for the funeral."

"I'll leave him on," I said.

"Thanks," she said. "I appreciate it."

—Stuart Dybeck, "Charity"
December 10, 1971

FAITH & ECONOMICS: A NEW NUMBERS GAME?

The future of poverty

MICHAEL HARRINGTON

IN THE 1950s, Americans literally did not see the poverty which existed in what was commonly — but wrongly — thought to be an "affluent society." In part, that was a result of a new sociology of vision caused by large numbers of people moving to the suburbs and losing contact with the poor who, in great numbers, remained in the central cities. It was, then, a shock to discover the misery that persisted on either side of the federally subsidized highways that led from the office to the new homes on the urban periphery.

In the 1980s that sociological trend continues apace. The cities are, more than ever before, warehouses for those who have been left behind by progress, many of them black, a fair number "undocumented" and working in the renascent sweatshops of the computer age. But the media have, on the whole, done an excellent job of keeping the images of suffering before the people. The *Wall Street Journal* has published some of the finest reportage in this area, and television has regularly visited the soup kitchens and dying mill towns. And yet, there is still great confusion about poverty, even a tendency for "informed" opinion to say that it has been greatly exaggerated.

The problem today is not one of immediate vision but rather of how to interpret what the eyes — or the media — see. Today it is not so much the social-geographical structure of the society but sophisticated theories, often buttressed with impressive statistics and charts, that convince us that we are not really seeing what in fact we see. It was with considerable reluctance that I really tried, in *The New American Poverty* (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, $17.95, 271 pp.), to draw a map of the statistical maze. I would have preferred simply to describe ghettoes,

MICHAEL HARRINGTON, *whose books include* The Other America, Socialism, *and* The New American Poverty *(Holt, Rinehart, and Winston), is a National Co-Chair of the Democratic Socialists of America.*

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slums, and the depressed backwood.

The debate over the theories and the numbers goes on, as three new books make quite clear: *The New Politics of Inequality* by Thomas Byrne Edsall (Norton $15.95, 288 pp.), *Losing Ground* by Charles Murray (Basic Books, $23.95, 323 pp.), and *America's Hidden Success* by John E. Schwarz (Norton, $12.95, 208 pp.). I do not propose to "review" them, but rather to use them to explore some of the central themes in the current discussion. Edsall and Schwarz I find quite useful, even though both have flaws. Murray, however, is a perfect example of the current problem, a seemingly well documented, actually tendentious study in which an apparent objectivity is the facade for a sweeping, reactionary program which could do serious harm to the poor.

First, there is the famous debate concerning the overestimation of poverty as a result of the failure to include the cash value of in-kind goods and services (food stamps, Medicaid) received by the poor when the extent of poverty is estimated.

I will not tarry long over this argument since it has been around for about a decade, and I have documented my critique of it in my new book. It is absolutely true that a serious definition of poverty must take into account the extent of a possible overcount as a result of the value of those goods and services. But how, exactly, does one "cash in" those programs? Take one example of this problem.

About 40 percent of Medicaid services goes to aging paupers in nursing homes, i.e., it is terminal care for people ending their lives in poverty. If the medical problems of such people are severe enough, they can statistically ascend into the middle class. But should the funds thus disbursed — and we are speaking of the most costly single in-kind service — be conceptually allocated to the entire poverty population? And isn't this a form of "income" that everyone of us hopes we will never receive?

The overcount thesis carefully scrutinizes every possibility that we have exaggerated the extent of poverty. And it just as carefully ignores considerable evidence that we have underestimated it. The tough-minded, critical spirit, it would seem, moves in only one, rather value-laden, direction, even though it decks itself out in the trappings of scholarly impartiality. You will not, for instance, find these researchers worrying about the carefully developed case made by Molly Orshansky, the woman who defined the poverty line in the first place, that our numbers, for a variety of technical reasons, significantly understate the number of the poor. Nor is there any attempt to estimate the number of the undocumented poor who may well have escaped the statistician's net.

Strangely enough, there is a liberal, as well as a conservative, rationale for this procedure. Indeed, one of the first statements of this thesis was made by the Congressional Budget Office when it was under the direction of a Brookings' economist, Alice Rivlin. For the right, the overcount proves that we have been throwing money at a nonproblem and is one more reason for cutting back on the

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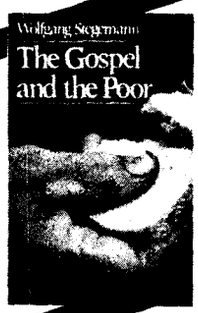

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spending. For the left — and this is the most serious flaw in Schwarz's otherwise very useful book — it is cited to show that the liberal programs of the sixties really worked.

Those programs did work even though, in Pat Moynihan's phrase, they were "oversold and underfinanced," and it is Schwarz's virtue to document in detail the fact; this, in short, is the "hidden success" that supplies his study with its title. The problem is, however, that a new poverty began to appear in the early seventies which has become even more deeply rooted in our society in the past five or six years.

This is a major factual point on which Charles Murray and I agree. But Murray's book explains that persistence of poverty by arguing that it was, and is, a consequence of a misguided War on Poverty. In the sixties, he says, we altered the motivations for working by increasing Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), initiating a food stamp program which provided some help for the working poor, and by coddling criminals and thus providing incentives for the poor to turn to the underworld rather than the labor market. As a result, in 1968 the "rules governing the labor market" had been so radically changed that the generation of poor blacks turning eighteen was motivated to shun work. This, Murray holds, is the cause of the new poverty.

First, credit where credit is due. Murray's concept of "latent poverty" is quite handy. He tracks the number of Americans who would be poor were it not for government transfers. This gives us, so to speak, the Adam Smith component of poverty, the "natural" outcome of the economy. It is considerably higher than the official poverty count which is based on numbers calculated after the cash-based welfare and Social Security programs (as distinguished from the in-kind benefits) are taken into account. Latent poverty, Murray asserts, has been rising for over a decade. Right.

One consequence of this turn of events, and here again I agree, is that "the poverty-reduction power of economic growth diminished sharply at the turn of the 1970s." Why? Here we come to a fundamental disagreement, and a conviction on my part that Murray's book is inexcusably tendentious and uni-causal. Underlying all of Murray's profoundly flawed empirical arguments is an equally flawed premise about human behavior: that the poor are motivated solely by a sophisticated cost-benefit analysis of the relative value of work as against welfare. The problem is, every time halfway decent jobs are offered in the United States today, hundreds, sometimes thousands, of the poor will wait in the rain, and even fight with one another, for the chance to get, not the job itself, but just an application for the job.

Let me, however, be more than anecdotal in my critique. I should note that Murray only cites evidence of the failures of the programs of the sixties. His figures on the failure of all manpower programs in that decade as well as the seventies are ably contravened by the evidence in Schwarz's *America's Hidden Success*. The point is not central to Murray's basic

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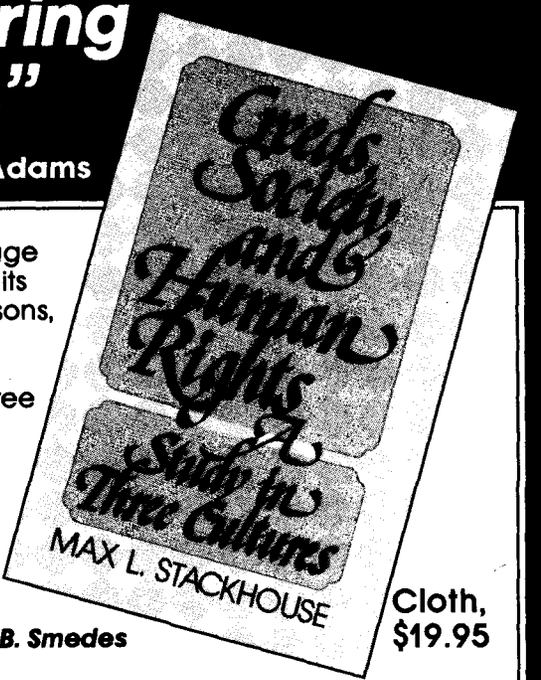

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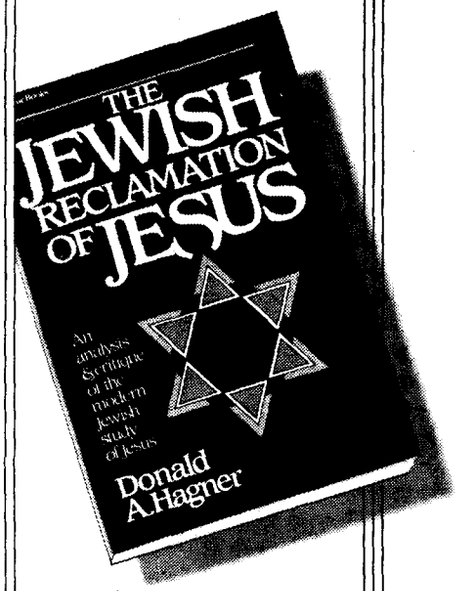

THE JEWISH RECLAMATION OF JESUS

DONALD A. HAGNER

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theme, but it is one more illustration of how polemical his book is.

More seriously, Murray argues that AFDC benefits motivated poor people to take themselves out of the labor market. Now there is no doubt that there are irrational and harmful effects of this program, particularly in those states where AFDC is not available when there is an unemployed, but employable, parent in the home. But the real problem is that Murray bases his theories on an AFDC that does not exist.

Rudolph Penner, the conservative (American Enterprise Institute) economist who now heads the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) testified last year before a Ways and Means subcommittee that AFDC "guarantees have declined in real terms since at least 1969 and, in proportion to the poverty lines, the AFDC guarantee levels plus food stamps benefits are in all cases below the federal minimum guarantee for couples receiving SSI [Supplemental Security Income]." But how does the declining real value, not simply of AFDC, but of AFDC plus food stamps, motivate the poor not to look for a job?

Secondly, Murray seems unaware of the evidence that, as David Stockman put it before Congress, "most families' stays on the AFDC rolls are relatively short." Only 15 percent of AFDC participants are in the program for more than eight years; 47 percent leave within two years. And the main reason that women with children go to AFDC is not that they have lost work motivation, but that a man has walked out on them. It is also not true, as Murray clearly implies, that having babies is a "rational" choice made by a poor woman in order to avoid work. The average AFDC family size is about the same as the average American family size.

Finally, Murray cites a book by Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward to show that the National Welfare Rights Organization was a major force in getting poor people to fight for "the right for long-term, unfettered, generous charity." He does not cite a later volume by the same authors which shows that NWRO never organized more than a small fraction of the welfare mothers.

Food stamps are attacked by Murray on the ground that they corrupted the working poor: "Pride in independence was compromised and with it a certain degree of pressure on the younger generation to make good on the family tradition." In this case, we do not have to speculate. The Reagan administration gave billions in tax welfare to the very rich but took away food stamp and Medicaid eligibility from the working poor. At the time, there were many who thought that this latter action would be a work disincentive, motivating people to turn to welfare now that their in-kind income had been lowered. Reagan's action, was, no mistake about it, mean, and caused human suffering. But the evidence is that there was no significant move away from work to welfare. The Protestant ethic, it turns out, survived the harrowing experience of having a little extra food.

Crime, Murray says, was made an attractive alternative to work by the new rights accorded prisoners, and sentencing policies which drastically lowered the probability of going to prison. Indeed, Murray even waxes nostalgic about the good old days when poor people were "taken into an interrogation room and questioned without benefit of counsel." Alas, he notes, "by 1970, the poor person had acquired an array of protections and strategems that were formerly denied him. . . ." This was an increase in equality before the law (good, says Murray) and an incentive to crime rather than work (bad).

There are so many one-sided arguments in this portion of the book that I can only advise the reader to turn to Charles W. Silberman's *Criminal Violence, Criminal Justice*, a volume which literally explodes Murray's stereotypes. Silberman quotes a wide range of studies from different points of view to show that the ratio of incarceratations to arrests in the 1920s was less than under the Warren Court. There was, and is, a statistical illusion that the opposite is the case, but presumably Murray's street-wise calculators would determine their choices on the basis of their real world rather than referring to the *Uniform Crime Report of the FBI*.

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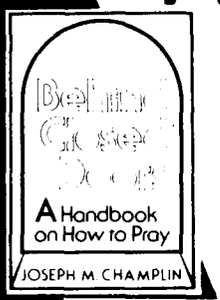

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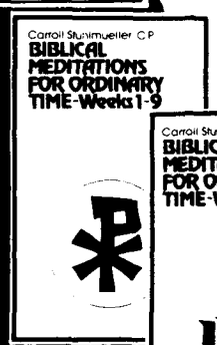

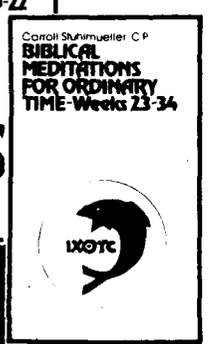

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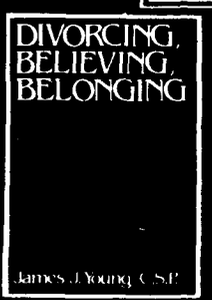

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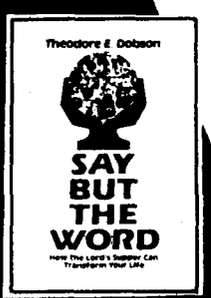

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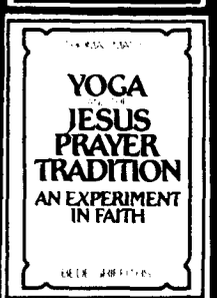

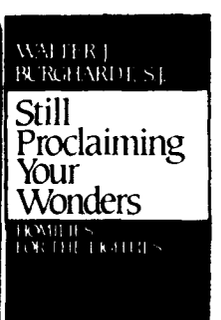

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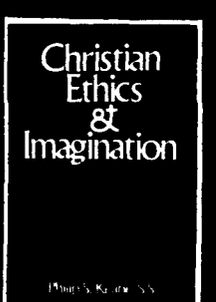

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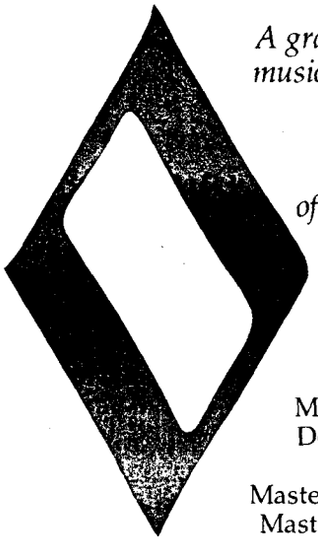
FINALLY, MURRAY'S most startling single error has to do with blacks' participation in the labor force. There was, he holds, a pronounced tendency for blacks to remove themselves from the labor market at precisely that point in time — 1968 — when the misguided job disincentives were put into practice. First the anti-poverty laws, then the flight from the work force. *Post hoc, ergo propter hoc*. But Murray's error consists in more than a dubious leap of logic. Consider something else. At one point in his discussion of the tremendous increase in people receiving disability payments under a program initiated by President Eisenhower in the fifties, Murray quotes (in a footnote) a definition from an article by Donald Parsons in the *American Economic Review* (December, 1980).

The reader may well wonder why I point so emphatically to a mere footnote. The reason is that Parsons's article, cited by Murray on a technical matter, contains material which undermines Murray's basic argument. A large number of black males, Parsons argues, did indeed leave the labor force, but the trend started, not in 1968, but in the fifties when disabled workers were given the right to benefits. But why did blacks respond more than whites? For two reasons, which Parsons documents. First, physical disabilities were more prevelant among blacks than whites; second, the concentration of black workers in poverty jobs meant that they had less to lose in trying to get in a program that had a relatively high rejection rate.

If, Parsons concluded, one statistically "controls" for these health and economic factors, there is then no "systematic difference in behavior between the two racial groups." Misery, including physical infirmity, explains much of the trend — not "coddling" by sixties welfare programs. Indeed, Murray himself cites the effect of this process — the increase in the number of disability beneficiaries from 687,000 in 1960 to 4,352,000 in 1975 — without inquiring into how this affects his other numbers.

But isn't it possible that those disabled workers were malingering, and that Murray is right on the essential thesis — that generous social programs provided work disincentives — while merely wrong on the name of the program? Not quite. Parsons pursued that possibility and discovered that those with lower labor force



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participation rates because of this program tended to die early. And we know that the savage Reaganite attack on the disabled—half a million were lopped off the roles—was so unfair that some U.S. attorneys appointed by the Reagan administration itself refused to prosecute the cases. Congress has since put a stop to the whole vile process.

Does this mean that the disability program alone explains the existence of a new and persisting poverty? Of course not. The threat of poverty now faced by industrial workers and their communities is a result of a technological revolution and the transformation of the international division of labor. The "feminization" of poverty — particularly the percentage increase in the number of younger women among the adult poor — is cultural and even spiritual in origin as well as economic, and so is the epidemic of teenage pregnancy. The decline of the traditional family and sexual morality has roots in the changing nature of urban life, the inferior position of women in the occupational structure, *and* a breakdown of family which is not accounted for by simply citing those "material" causes. Needless to say, all of these complications utterly elude Murray's monochromatic, flawed thesis.

Murray's case, then, falls when scrutinized critically. And his conclusions point to doing away with AFDC, food stamps, and almost the entire welfare state (he even seems to be hostile to help for the retarded, the learning-disabled, and the emotionally disturbed) in order to end what he alleges to be the corruption of the poor. The alternatives? Among others, the generosity of local communities in dealing with such problems. Perhaps Murray might interview a "deinstitutionalized" mental patient who was rightly discharged from an inhuman asylum, then wrongly turned over to the tender mercies of the local communities.

Alas, there seems to be a market for such statistical and scholarly meanness these days. And it affects our politics, as Thomas Edsall reminds us in *The New Politics of Inequality*.

There are many fascinating aspects of Edsall's analysis and I even have some disagreements with him that would be important in other contexts ("class skewed voting" is not, to my mind, a recent development, but one which Reagan has made particularly obvious; in computing the impact of taxes, the high nominal rates paid by the rich in the past are to be taken with a handful of salt). But what is critical, to my mind, is the way in which Edsall deals with the political impact of the tax burden. Bracket creep, the increase in the Social Security tax base (which hits at the middle class but not the rich), and a host of other tax factors have convinced a good many working- and middle-class Americans that they pay too much for welfare programs for the poor.

It is this phenomenon, Edsall warns, that could transform the Democratic party into a minority formation, not the least because its poverty and working-class constituencies vote so much less than Reagan's upper-class and rich constituency. But the truly critical element is the political battle for the middle of the society. These are the people who be-

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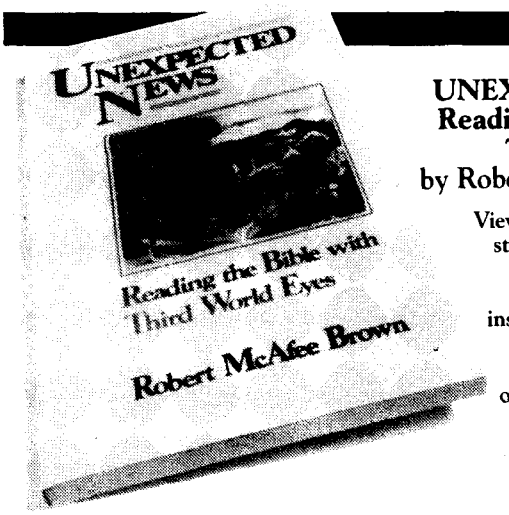

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lieve that they are over-taxed and pay a disproportionate percentage of the cost of welfare. They are right on both counts.

But those working- and middle-class people draw a completely erroneous conclusion from their justified anger: that since they pay "too much" for the poor, the poor are to blame. But that is not the case at all. The poor, in general, receive less in the United States than in any other Western industrial democracy and, as we have seen, their real living standard declined throughout the seventies and the eighties. The villain in the piece is not to be found in the poor — who lost more in cash income than any other group during the last four years — but in the rich who so successfully avoid paying their fair share.

That trend pre-dated Ronald Reagan and existed under Democratic administrations, but Reagan has clearly made the very worst of a bad situation. He did not simply give away billions to the wealthy; he actually increased the federal tax burden of the poor. And the people in the middle made no gains — the second quintile from the bottom suffered a net income loss, the third a slight gain, the top quintile went up by a hefty percentage — which is usual. The point is, the political strategy for a renewed assault on poverty cannot be predicated on the assumption that the "affluent" middle is going to exercise noblesse oblige toward those suffering at the bottom. The middle isn't affluent and any effective strategy has to be based on taking welfare away from the rich rather than raising the taxes of the middle.

This is critically important to grasp right now given the fact that indeed there is going to be a great debate on taxation next year. If the Democratic party buys some version of a modified "flat tax," i.e., if it abandons the principle, so often honored in the breach, of progressive federal taxation, that will not simply be a blow to equity. It will also be a way of digging a political grave for the Democratic presidential party. In this context, if Ronald Reagan has followed a class-biased policy, as Thomas Edsall so thoroughly documents, then the Democrats will have to be at least as class conscious as the Republicans are.

STRANGELY ENOUGH, I am not disheartened, not even by an election which Ronald Reagan appears likely to win. To be sure, I am profoundly disturbed by the new ideological and statistical attack on the poor. I am willing to grant that Murray's heart is in the right place, but the fact remains that he has provided a sophisticated, profoundly flawed, rationale for Scrooge. Schwarz and Edsall are part of an intellectual counterattack, but there is an enormous amount of work to be done in rescuing the poor from their "objective" tormentors. Most importantly, I am convinced that Reagan's sand castle recovery, as economically and politically real as it is fragile, will crumble sooner or later. And at that point, more and more people in this society are going to learn that the poor are, and were, the first victims of macroeconomic trends which threaten us all.

I would hope we will turn to the poor out of a sense of justice and compassion. We should not forget, however, that it is in the common interest of the entire society to put an end to this needless, and now revitalized, misery.

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FREEDOM WITH JUSTICE
CATHOLIC SOCIAL THOUGHT AND LIBERAL INSTITUTIONS
Michael Novak
Harper & Row, $17.95, 240 pp.

OPTION FOR THE POOR
A HUNDRED YEARS OF VATICAN SOCIAL TEACHING
Donal Dorr
Orbis, $11.95, 336 pp.

SOCIAL JUSTICE MINISTRY
FOUNDATIONS AND CONCERNS
Paul Steidl-Meier, S.J.
La Jacq, $24, $19 paper, 343 pp.

Peter Steinfels

HERE, to begin with, is an odd couple — two books surveying a hundred years or more of Catholic social teaching, each from a very specific, and nearly opposite, point of view. Donal Dorr examines papal social thought with an eye to discovering "the extent to which the church has committed itself to being on the side of those who are poor or oppressed." Michael Novak examines roughly the same body of thought with an eye to discovering the extent to which the church has set itself on the side of "liberal institutions," if not quite of liberal ideology. For Dorr, being on the side of the poor or oppressed finally boils down to being vigorously opposed to Western capitalism. For Novak, supporting "liberal institutions" finally boils down to supporting that very same capitalism. Obviously, for maximum effect, the two books should be read together.

Overworked Novak-watchers will be relieved to learn that in *Freedom with Justice*, the author has produced only a new book and not a new persona. He is the same earnest apostle of *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism*, although *Freedom with Justice* is a more sober and, in my judgment, a better work, perhaps because its author is here tied down to the particularities of texts and to the singular historical contexts in which they emerged. I am not thinking of his by-now standard rebukes to the church for "utopianism" or of his own truly utopian (and statistically garbled) approach to the poverty problem, but of his sections on Bishop von Ketteler, Heinrich Pesch, Oswald von Nell-Breuning, and the German "solidarist" school whose critique of capitalism and individualism was an important source of papal teachings. In presenting these figures respectfully and yet pointing out their link to an unhappy current of Romantic German anti-liberalism, Novak usefully reminds us of the ambiguous elements in Catholic

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social doctrine. Provocative but less successful is his attempt to measure Catholic condemnations of nineteenth-century liberalism against a real-life example, the John Stuart Mill of *Principles of Political Economy*. Novak has no trouble showing that Mill's views on property, wages, and the future of the working class escaped the papal stereotype; but then again these are topics on which Mill has long been recognized as a suspiciously "heretical" liberal. What a different problem Novak might have faced had he chosen some true believer in the church of laissez faire, John Bright, for example, or the once widely honored (especially in America) Herbert Spencer.

On the basis of a few passages Novak has encountered in economics texts, he gives the impression that the "Manchester School" was perhaps a creation of papal, or even socialist, imagination; or at most a benign German group of reforming economists. Presumably, there were no real-life models for Dickens's Gradgrind and Bounderby; there were no liberal spokesmen who fiercely denounced every government or trade-union intervention on behalf of workers as a dangerous crime against Freedom and Property. Or if there were, they were only wayward and unaccountable abusers of liberal political economy. This is a curiously denatured view of history. But it reflects Novak's fond notion that the wonderful equilibrium of today's "democratic capitalism" unfolded naturally from Adam Smith's master plan. For him to recognize that such balance as exists in contemporary Western democracies was won through hard struggles, often guided by egalitarian and anti-capitalist beliefs, would be to raise the disconcerting possibility that such struggles and such beliefs might still have a further role to play.

Nonetheless, Novak is right in criticizing earlier papal statements for a disdainful attitude toward liberalism, born of judging liberalism only in its more extreme forms rather than its evolved and modulated versions. Novak does not notice that the same criticism can be made about papal attitudes toward socialism.

Where Novak adds discussions of German solidarism and British liberalism to his analysis of the social encyclicals, Dorr adds explications of other papal speeches and statements, as well as of Conciliar and episcopal documents, including those of Medellin. Novak (enthusiastically) and Dorr (with misgivings) agree in seeing John XXIII as an optimistic exponent of Western liberalism and reformist welfare capitalism. With *Populorum Progressio* and the turn toward questions of global justice, it's mostly downhill from Novak's viewpoint and uphill from Dorr's. Both make interesting efforts to assimilate John Paul II to their own concerns. Novak sees him offering a "creation theology" to counter liberation theology; Dorr sees him validating the

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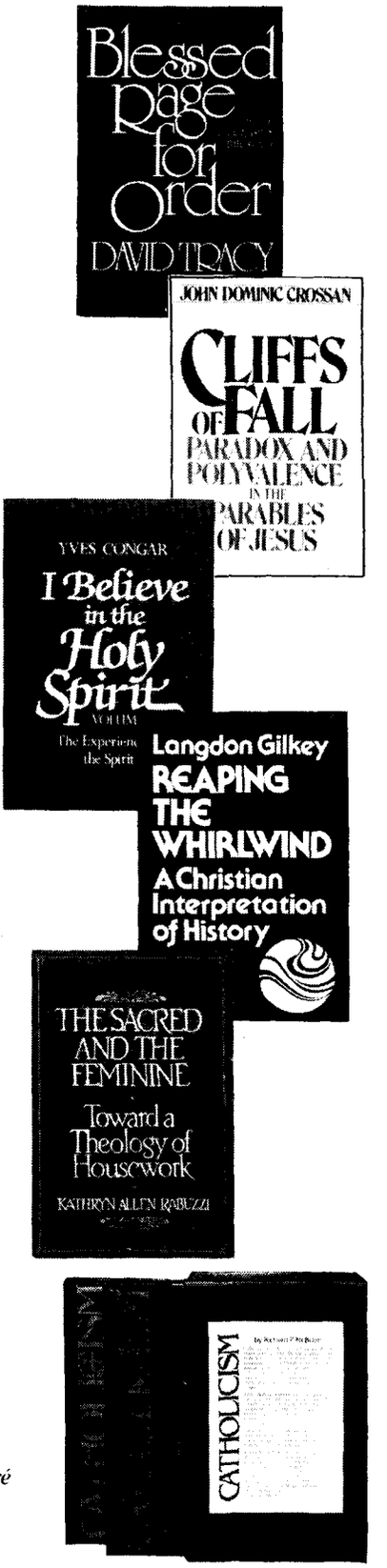

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struggle, even the confrontational struggle, for change "from below."

By and large, I think Dorr gives the texts a closer reading, and seems more willing to allow them to deviate from his own preferred opinions without straining for a congenial interpretation or condescendingly wagging his finger. But Dorr's book also illustrates why a reaction like Novak's is both inevitable and useful. Throughout Dorr's book runs the assumption — completely unexamined — that virtually nothing stands in the way of the well-being of the poor except the "structures" of Western capitalism. In fact, neither author, in text or footnotes, seems to recognize the possibility of plausible alternative views on the complex subject of economic development.

Novak's final chapter takes to task a Pontifical Commission document on international economics prepared by the Jesuit Paul Steidl-Meier. I have not read the document, although little in the passages quoted here appears to justify Novak's animadversions. Steidl-Meier has done graduate work in both philosophy and development economics, worked in different parts of the third world, and taught social ethics as well as agricultural policy. This exceptional background explains the riches of his *Social Justice Ministry*, a book that genuinely brings together theology, history, sociology, economics, and spirituality in illuminating the church's commitment to social justice. Alas, it is a book that defies summary, and in its complexity it will never be seized upon as a popular "weapon" to vindicate one or another party in the current debate about Catholic social activism. Novak begins and ends his book by wondering what direction Catholic social thought will take in the next decades. One of the best places we might get our bearings for that journey would be in Paul Steidl-Meier's *Social Justice Ministry*.

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HIS LIFE AND THOUGHT

Barbara Wood

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Francis J. Flaherty

DETRACTORS often called the unconventional Ernst Friedrich Schumacher a crank. And when they did, reports the late British economist's daughter in this competent biography, he would delightedly reply, "A crank is a piece of simple technology that creates revolutions."

For a while, it seemed that "Fritz" Schumacher would set an economic revolution in motion, particularly in the years just before his death at age sixty-six in 1977. His blasts at the world's imprudent reliance on nonrenewable resources, his advocacy of dignified and challenging job conditions, his critique of myopic economic nationalism, and his often-drawn distinction between a sufficiency and a surfeit of material goods attracted thousands. When his *Small Is Beautiful* and *A Guide for the Perplexed* were published in the mid-1970s, he became an international guru. College students lionized him, third-world leaders importuned him to visit and advise them and, a few months before his death, he found himself lounging in the White House, trading economic notions with an admiring President Jimmy Carter.

But few people heed Schumacher's thoughts now. And so it is useful to have an ably-written book which revives his ideas and tells us what he was like as a person.

It was Schumacher's remarkable suc-

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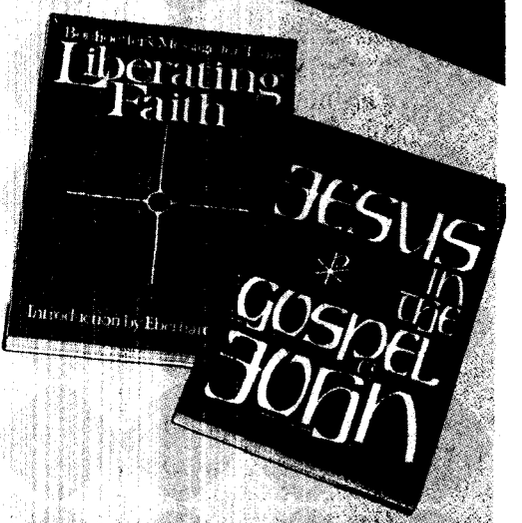

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cess as a conventional economist that gave credence to his unconventional ideas. He was an Oxford economics scholar, an admired colleague of John Maynard Keynes, and a recognized expert in such nuts-and-bolts matters as agricultural technology and international finance. He served as the top economist to the British commission in Germany after World War II and as the chief economist of the British National Coal Board from 1949 to 1971. And he was a statistician of international renown. Shortly before Keynes's death, in fact, the eminent economist said, "If my mantle is to fall on anyone, it could only be Otto Clarke or Fritz Schumacher. Otto Clarke can do anything with figures, but Fritz Schumacher can make them sing."

But Schumacher soon became more than a very good traditional economist. He started asking questions most economists never broach. For one, he saw clearly the nexus between economics and moral values, the falsity of the view of economics as a neutral natural science. "The science of economics does not stand on its own two feet: it is derived from a view of the meaning and purpose of life," he wrote in a paper commissioned by the Burmese government in 1955.

He soon soured of the values implicit in Western economics. Capitalism as practiced is a profligate, violent system, he argued, which ravaged the world's resources, enforced a crass materialism, and used people as tools. He first reached these conclusions in the late 1940s and the 1950s, when the rest of the world, reveling in the post-war recovery, lightly dismissed his views.

In 1956, for instance, he focused on the folly of economics based on oil, coal, and gas — the three major nonrenewable fuels. "During the last twelve years or so the world has burned more oil than in its entire previous history," he wrote then. "Eighty percent of the world economy is based on fuels which cannot last forever." To ransack "nature's larder" in this way, he wrote two years earlier, means "that we are living off capital in the most fundamental meaning of the word."

Nor could he countenance an economics that sentenced people to numbing, boring jobs while claiming best to promote the public weal. The purpose of work is as much self-fulfillment as self-support, he realized, simply because people deserve to lead challenging lives. "Factory workers can justly be called 'factory hands,' " he wrote in some 1944 Oxford lecture notes, "because it is only their hands which are utilized."

And so he favored people over money. "Stupid work produces stupid or desperate people," he wrote in 1958. "We must invest in the reduction of boredom."

Materialism earned his ire too. Borrowing from the Buddhist philosophy that informed much of his thought, he advised the third world to avoid the profligacy of the West. To some extent, "it was wants that made a man poor," writes Ms. Wood in summing up her father's view. Following the theories of conventional economics, the people of the West refused to make the distinction between the good life and gluttony, he claimed.

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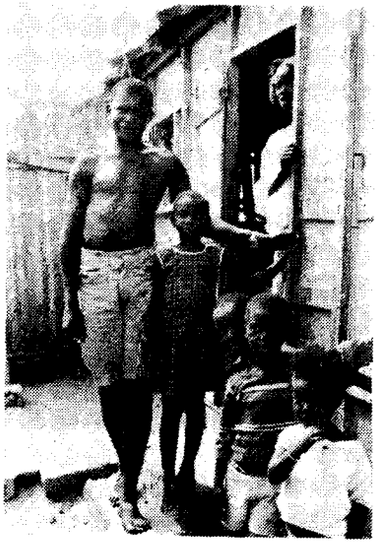

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Tribalism troubled him as well, especially the jingoism by which rich nations systematically gouged and gutted poor ones. This was a personal belief as well as an intellectual one. A native German who fled what he called the "nationalist poison" of the Nazis shortly before World War II, Schumacher at times was both scorned as a traitor by some Germans and shunned as a suspect alien by some of his adopted British citizens. With the high sensitivity of the outcast, he saw patriotism as the danger it can be. "The development of a person toward good consists in a continuous broadening . . . of his moral responsibility" beyond "national, racial, occupational, [and] religious" lines, he wrote in a 1937 letter to his wife.

Schumacher offered at least some answers to the problems he raised. Generally, he seemed to favor a blend of Western politics and Eastern economics, an optimal mix of individual freedom and economic egalitarianism. More specifically, his many projects fleshed out his ideas. He fashioned a widely adopted strategy for third-world agricultural development using small-scale, or "intermediate," technology. He was a guiding light behind a worker-owned Swiss corporation. And he devised ingenious incentive and promotional structures for the British coal industry, so that miners could look forward to something more than the dirty, dead-end job of digging.

Unique among economists, Schumacher journeyed far into the realms of religion, philosophy, and politics. He drew heavily on Epictetus, Gandhi, St. Ignatius Loyola, Ortega y Gasset, and a host of other thinkers; he practiced astrology and yoga; and he followed a long spiritual quest that brought him from scientific rationalism in his youth to nondenominational deism in middle age and to conversion to Catholicism in 1971.

Ms. Wood does a fine job explaining her father's economic and philosophical views. As one might expect, she also very effectively evokes the *Cheaper by the Dozen* ambience of the Schumacher home in Caterham, England, with Fritz testing his intermediate technology in the vegetable garden, and his many children making faces at a much-disliked visiting Buddhist monk in the dining room. And we learn much about her father as a man — his love of thinking, his intellectual restlessness, his quirks, and his occasional arrogance.

Though delightful, these are mere sidelights to the proper focus of the book on Schumacher the polymathic economist. If anything, the need for his gentle, humane economics is more urgent now than when he began to conjure it up nearly fifty years ago. Perhaps this lively and clear biography will help to return his good ideas to the prominence they had when he died in 1977.

Correspondence

(Continued from page 580)

the political campaign has become religion. As a Catholic, I am concerned about Catholic bishops who support Reagan in word or action. I believe that some bishops who state the abortion issue takes first priority, do not understand that the arms race poses "a situation of extreme and immediate danger." While Reagan has promised to fight to stop two million abortions a year, many people believe he could be the cause of between 20 and 160 million deaths by starting a nuclear war. Must not Christians answer to God someday for ignoring the world's 500 million starving people because we support an administration that spends $1 billion a day on military programs? Hunger has killed more people in the past five years than have been killed in all the wars, revolutions, and murders in the past 150 years.

So isn't it a "consistent ethic of life" for Christians who fight against abortion to also oppose nuclear war and capital punishment and support the powerless, the old, the hungry, the handicapped, the unemployed and the terminally ill because there is a common denominator—respect for life from the womb to the tomb?

Since the Democrats are more cautious and less likely to lead us into nuclear war and show promise of serving the common good better than the Republicans, I am voting for Mondale and Ferraro, despite my abhorrence of abortion.

JERRY NOWAK

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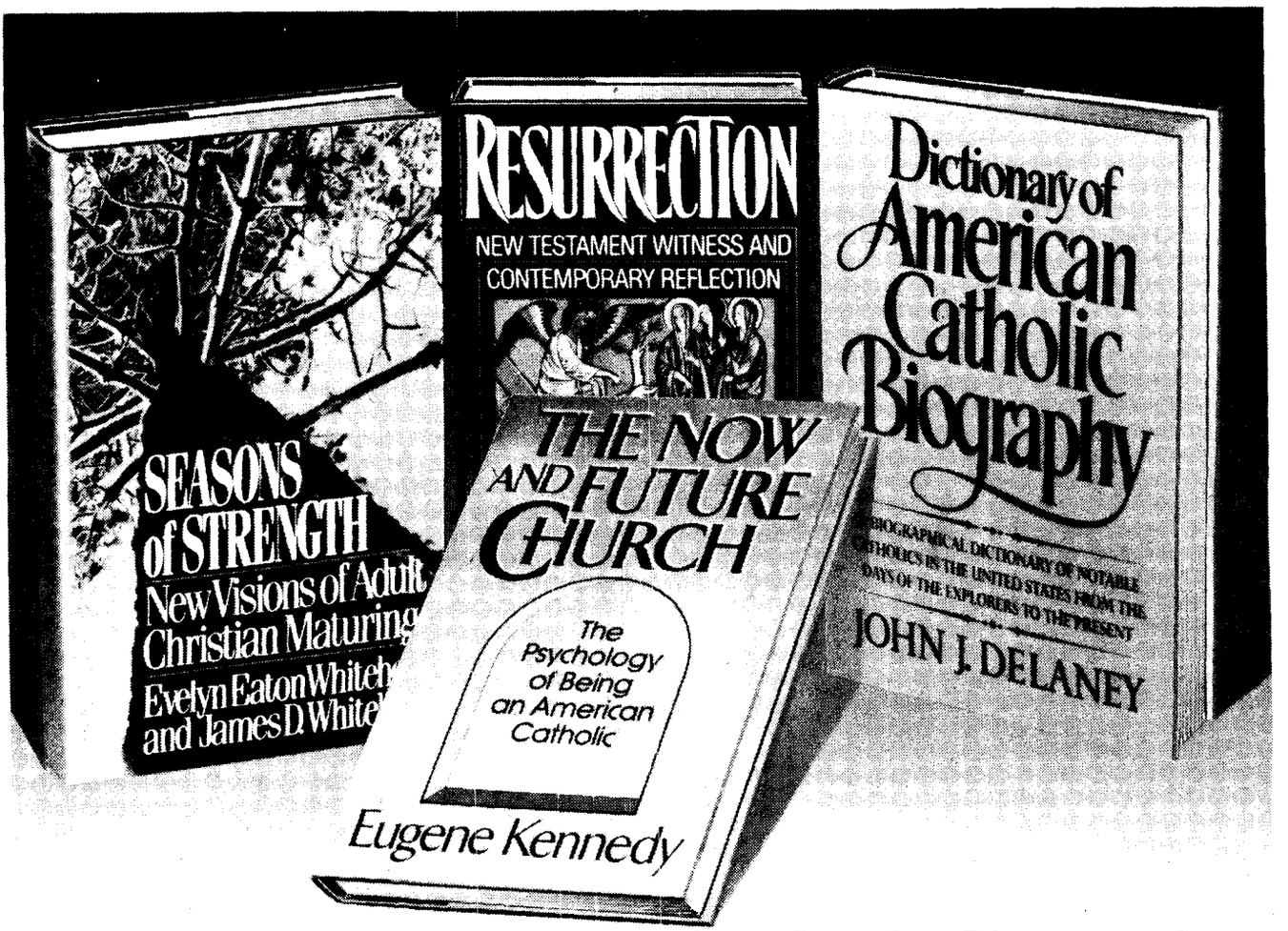

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